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B 116

"WE HAD CROSSED SWORDS, HE ON HIS TALL CHARGER.
I ON FOOT"

The Princess of Balkh

A Tale of the Wars of
Aurangzebe

BY

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PREFACE

In writing my *Tales of Indian Chivalry* the materials were principally derived from Tod's *Rajasthan*. The *Memoirs of Colonel Alexander Gardner*, edited by Major Hugh Pearse, also gave me some useful hints. These memoirs have proved still more useful in the following story of Central Asian warfare. I have also drawn largely upon Burnes' *Travels into Bokhara* and Elphinstone's *Caubul* for information about the geography and climate of Central Asia and the manners and customs of the inhabitants. The Indian part of the story depends mainly upon Bernier's *History* for the descriptions of Delhi and the imperial court in the days of Shah Jehan and Aurangzebe. Considerable liberties have been taken with Central Asian history. The heroine is entirely an imaginary person. Nazir Khan can hardly be identified with the historical

Nazir Muhammad However, the main facts narrated in the story are true, namely, that Aurangzebe invaded the Usbeg territory, gained for a time possession of Balkh, and was eventually driven back over the mountains of the Hindu Kush to Cabul with heavy loss, which was as much due to the snows of winter as to the attacks of the Usbegs

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THE PRINCESS OF BALKH

CHAPTER I

PHILIPHAUGH TO STRAT

“Now all is done that man can do,
And all is done in air,
My love, my native land adieu,
We ne’er shall meet again.”

SUCH were the words of the old song that I sang, as our little cockle-shell was tossed up and down by the tumbling billows of the wild northern sea between Scotland and Norway. Part of the sentiment of the song was fortunately not applicable to my case. I had indeed done all I could for my king and country at the battles of Tippermuir, Inverlochy, Kilsyth, and, last of all, on the fatal field of Philiphaugh, where Leslie’s troopers took us unawares and robbed us of all the fruits of our hard-won victories. But in the

hour of misfortune it was some consolation that I left Scotland fancy free. Of all the beautiful girls whose bright eyes favoured the cause of God and the king, none had made a conquest of my heart. My father and mother were long dead, and in my old home there was no one left to feel much sorrow at my departure to a foreign clime except Mr Williams, my English tutor, who had not only taught me Latin, but also boxing, shooting, and fencing.

There was also in my heart another source of consolation in the alluring whispers of hope. Well I knew that a great destiny lay before me, that the dark clouds of misfortune, which now seemed to lower over my head, would sooner or later be dispersed by the sunlight of triumph and glory. White-haired Sandy, the Highland bard, whose predictions have never been known to fail, had foreseen my future in a clear vision. He saw me, by the light of prophecy, in some cold northern country, the name of which he could not declare, driving southwards a great army that threatened the liberties of the people; and then the vision changed, and I appeared seated on a dazzling white throne with a jewelled

tiara on my brow, and a fair princess bride by my side. So, when I escaped from the rout of Philiphaugh, I made for the east coast with my faithful followers, Donelly, the Irishman, and my twin foster-brethren, Duncan and Colin. With ten gold pieces out of my belt I bribed the east coast fishermen to launch their lugger on the stormy sea and steer for Norway, thinking that there, or still farther east in Muscovy, Sandy's dream would be realized, and my destiny would be accomplished.

The north wind veered to the north-east and blew stronger and stronger. After a hard struggle we were compelled to give up our attempts to make the coast of Norway, and, as the gale increased to a tempest, it presently became necessary to take down every stitch of canvas and scud southwards under bare poles. For days and nights we were driven along at the mercy of wind and wave. The battered sides of our storm-tossed lugger began to leak, and, what with the water that came in through the cracks and the waves that splashed over her bulwarks, she would soon have gone to the bottom if we had not bailed with might and main. Even so, the water gradually rose

in the boat, till at last, in the darkness before the dawn of our third day at sea, the fishermen told us that she was on the point of sinking

All my companions prepared themselves for a watery grave, and even I began to think that the sea would cheat me out of the future that Sandy's vision had foretold for me. This, however, was not to be. Just when hope was yielding to despair, a great vessel, the first we had seen since we left Scotland, hove in sight, and, seeing our distress, drew near to us. Ropes were thrown out over her side, and by their means we all clambered on board, leaving the fishing smack to be swallowed up in the waves, which were already beginning to rise above her bulwarks on one side.

The ship on which we found ourselves proved to be a Dutch East Indiaman bound for Surat. The skipper, being a humane, good-natured man, received us kindly and supplied all our wants with large-hearted hospitality. He could not, however, turn aside from his course to land us at any of the Continental or English ports that lay to our right or left. The strong north wind would have rendered it very difficult for him to beat up

for the English coast, and it was obviously perilous in such a storm to approach the lee coast of France. Also his duty to the owners of the ship required him to proceed on his journey without any unnecessary delay, and, his ship being somewhat undermanned, he was only too glad to add to his crew the six fishermen who had brought us from Scotland. So, whether we would or no, we were embarked on a voyage to India.

This did not matter much to myself and my three followers. England under rebel rule offered no attractions to us, and, as we had to take refuge in a foreign country, India would suit us as well as France or any European country, except that it seemed to afford me less chance of winning the northern princess of Sandy's vision.

The fishermen at first were terribly distressed at the thought of being taken so far away from their native land and from their families. However, it was at least a better prospect than the death that they had so narrowly escaped. Besides, large pay was offered them, which gave them the chance of returning home, if they ever should return, with what was to their eyes the prospect of unbounded wealth. So

they reconciled themselves to their lot and, as cheerfully as they could, helped the Dutch crew to work the ship

Many have travelled to the Indies before us, and described what they saw far better than I could do. I need not dwell upon the few incidents that diversified the monotony of our long voyage, how the porpoises gambolled in front of our prow, and huge man-eating whales followed our stern; how one day a strange fish, with wings like a bird, flew through the port-hole into my cabin; how, near the Cape of Good Hope, the waves rose so high that it seemed as if our ship could not possibly escape being engulfed, how one misty evening the shadowy canvas of that accursed bark, called the *Flying Dutchman*, showed itself on our weather bow and prepared us for the terrible storm that broke our foremast and drove us thirty leagues out of our course. Of all this, and of the many alarms from real or imaginary pirates when we approached the coast of India, and of the joy with which we landed at Surat and had a wholesome meal of fresh meat and vegetables, after subsisting for five months on salt pork and maggoty biscuits, I need say no more. It is only necessary to record that

on Saint Valentine's Day we at last reached the great city of Surat, the emporium of western India, and rested there for a time after the labours and dangers of our long voyage

CHAPTER II

SURAT TO AGRA

HAVING thus arrived at the gate of the Empire of the Great Mogul, it behoved us to consider our position and the possibilities of carving ourselves fortunes out of the fabulous wealth of India. What were our ways and means of carrying on our campaign? All the money we possessed was in my belt, and amounted to something less than sixty pieces of gold. I offered the Dutch skipper the whole amount in token of our gratitude, but he refused to take anything. The Scotch fishermen had worked manfully, and the presence of our good swords, he was pleased to say, had been a protection against the danger of piratical attacks, without which safeguard he could never have enjoyed a good night's sleep.

So we were able to keep our small stock of money undiminished for the present. We had all of us carefully preserved our arms. I had my Andrea Ferrara claymore and my pair of

pistols My foster-brethren had also their claymores and their targets, and Colin had managed to save his beloved bagpipes, on which he could play with marvellous skill Many a time he had charmed the Atlantic and Indian Oceans with the plaintive and martial airs of our native land, and made the long evenings seem short by the magic power of music. Duncan could play the pipes too, but not with his brother's consummate mastery of the instrument. His great social accomplishment was the sword-dance, in which he took as much delight himself as he gave to others. They were both strong wiry men, good soldiers in the battlefield, and capable of sustaining great and long-continued exertion, if necessary, on a meagre supply of meat and drink, that to a stout, well-fed Englishman would have been starvation They were entirely devoted to my fortunes with the whole-hearted unselfishness of Highland retainers When my elder brother, the chief of the MacAlpines, refused to raise his clan to fight under Montrose's standard for the king, Colin and Duncan, without a moment's hesitation, preferred to follow my lead. We had fought together in Montrose's battles, and had escaped from all the dangers

of the campaign without serious wound. As the battles of Philiphaugh and Naseby had ruined the royal cause in Scotland and England, we determined, rather than return and submit to the rule of fanatics and traitors, that we would try to use our arms in India in promoting our own fortunes with better success than had crowned our efforts when we fought for King Charles in Scotland.

Donnelly resolved to throw in his lot with us. He was a light-hearted Irishman, one of the fifteen hundred Irish Roman Catholics who had landed in the western Highlands in 1644, and formed the bulk of the army with which Montrose won the battle of Tippermuir. I once saved him from the tender mercies of some sour Covenanters who had captured him and were on the point of hanging him. In gratitude for this timely aid he vowed to live and die in my service, and even the prospect of facing the unknown dangers of a strange continent, inhabited by millions of dark-skinned heathens, did not shake his resolution for a moment. He was a valuable addition to our fighting strength, as he had an excellent matchlock and was a splendid marksman. His cheery spirit, wit,

and humour made him, from a social point of view, a most desirable companion. He always looked at the bright side of things, and his sanguine temper in times of trouble often made us cheerful in spite of ourselves.

Just before we started from Surat to plunge into the interior, an unexpected recruit joined us in the person of M'William, the youngest of the six fishermen who had accompanied us to India against their will. He was one of the strongest men of the stalwart class to which he belonged. He had the back and breast of a Hercules, and the muscles of his arms and legs stood out like chains of iron when he had occasion to exert their power. As he was unmarried, and of an adventurous spirit, he did not see why he should not remain with me a year or two and try his fortune in the land of fabulous wealth to which his destiny and mine had conducted him. Being, like most fishermen, very superstitious, he had implicit faith in second sight and had not the slightest doubt but that I should somewhere and somehow win the princess of the north promised me in Sandy's vision.

The other fishermen returned to England by the next English ship that sailed from Surat.

Each of them made £65 by the wages they earned as sailors on the two voyages. Two of them, as we learnt long afterwards, got back just in time to prevent their wives, who had long given them up for lost, from taking new mates.

We did not stay long at Surat. The Englishmen there almost all belonged to the crop-eared and psalm-singing faction that had risen in rebellion against the king. There was no love lost between us and them, nor did we take much interest in their everlasting discussions about the price of cotton and muslin, and the mysteries of foreknowledge and predestination. Neither commerce nor those who engaged in it, nor theological controversies, were much to our taste, and we determined to leave Surat in the company of a caravan that was just about to start in a few days for Delhi, the capital of the empire of the Great Mogul.

On enquiry we had learnt that to the north of India was a cold, mountainous country. We might either find the princess of our dreams there or, failing that, we might push on farther north to Muscovy, thus eventually arriving at the goal from which we had been diverted so far and so long by the winds and waves or

the North Sea. But how were we to get northward? The straight course would have led us across sandy deserts difficult to traverse, where we should probably have perished of thirst or been destroyed by bands of robbers. We were therefore recommended first to follow the well-trodden caravan route to Delhi. Thence we could accompany the great army advancing northward under Prince Aurangzebe to effect the reduction of some of the northern provinces of the empire which were in a state of open rebellion.

As we had no striking adventures on the way from Surat to Delhi, let it suffice to say that the journey took us about seven weeks. Having a taste for languages I occupied myself all the time in learning the camp language, called Urdu, a blending of the tongues of the Hindus and their Mahometan conquerors which had come into use as a means of communication between the Pathan or Mogul invaders and the inhabitants of the country, and was understood through the length and breadth of the empire, and even beyond its borders. An old Mahometan priest, who accompanied the caravan on his way back from a pilgrimage to Mecca, read with me at every halting-stage

an Urdu translation of a most interesting Arabian story-book called *The Thousand and One Nights*, and I practised myself in colloquial Hindustani by continually conversing with all sorts and conditions of men in the caravan upon all manner of subjects. By this means I not only gained a fluent mastery of the language, but also made myself familiar with the past history and present condition of the great empire, the capital of which we were approaching

The reigning emperor, as I was informed, was called Shah Jehan. He ruled over an immense territory extending from the snows of Central Asia to the Deccan or southern table-land of India, and bounded by the Indian Ocean on the east and by the Bay of Bengal on the west, a territory as large or larger than the three kingdoms of Great Britain, France, and Spain rolled into one. He had four sons who administered the great provinces of the empire and commanded the imperial armies on the frontier, while he himself generally abode at Delhi, his capital. In the previous year he had sent his youngest son, Murad, with an army of fifty thousand horse and ten thousand musketeers, rocket-

men, and gunners to conquer Balkh and Badakshan, the conquest of which countries was to be the stepping-stone to one of the great objects of his ambition, the acquisition of the famous Central Asian city of Samarcand, in which his great ancestor Tamerlane had reigned. When the young prince, by the help of his large army and experienced generals, had succeeded in conquering Kunduz and Balkh his heart failed him, and, to his father's great disgust, he determined to abandon his conquests and retire to Cabul. His faint-heartedness encouraged the Usbeks to rise in rebellion all through the lately-conquered countries, and, although the emperor sent fresh troops, the Moguls were hard pressed. At last Shah Jehan resolved to restore complete order on his northern frontier by sending his third son, Aurangzebe, with a fresh army to settle the country and thoroughly stamp out the rebellion. As we approached Delhi, we learnt that Aurangzebe had already advanced northwards as far as Peshawur, with the intention of beginning his campaign among the mountains of Central Asia in the beginning of summer.

CHAPTER III

THE IMPERIAL DURBAR

WHEN we arrived at Delhi, we put up at a large caravansera near the Ajmere gate of the city. It was a fine building kept up by Government for the reception of strangers. We sat there in the deep, shady verandas, gazing in wonder at the stream of people that flowed through the great street before us. Most of the men were of a brown or olive complexion, but there were also coal-black negroes among them, and one or two men from the north, who were not much darker than Europeans. In spite of the immense crowds the air was free from dust, as men called "beasties" had sprinkled the ground abundantly with water from skins that they carried on their backs. This was a delightful change to us travellers, who had for hours been toiling on through clouds of dust that made the air difficult to breathe.

It was also a pleasure to sit at ease and

watch the wayfarers pass by, and see how well they were protected against the heat of the sun by the thick foliage of the trees planted by the roadside. Some were on foot, others on the backs of horses, camels, and elephants, and others in palanquins borne on the shoulders of their servants. Their dresses were various in colour and fashion, according to the country from which they came and the class or caste to which they belonged. They were objects of wonder and interest to us, and seemed to reciprocate our feelings by the intent gaze they fixed upon us as they passed by the caravanseraï. Some among the passers-by were evidently men of high rank. From the state by which they were surrounded, and the rich robes in which they were clad, it appeared that they were going to some great festival. We found on enquiry that this was the case. The main stream of the people in the streets was directed to the imperial palace, where that day Shah Jehan was to hold a durbar or reception.

The custodian of the caravanseraï informed me that the emperor, on such occasions gave access to all who wanted to see him, and that he would pay especial attention to any-

one who, like myself, had come from a far country. I immediately made up my mind to embrace this favourable opportunity of seeing him. There was no time for me to purchase suitable Indian dress for the occasion, nor did I wish to part lightly with any of my very limited number of gold pieces, so I determined to go in the tartan plaid of my clan, which I had carefully preserved throughout my journey by sea and land. As my foster-brothers' plaids were worn threadbare and discoloured by constant exposure to sun and dust, I hired from the keeper of the caravanserai for them and my other two retainers the flowing white robes of the country, so that we might not appear before the Emperor of India travel-stained and dusty, as the Earl of Essex was when he offended his proud mistress.

Thus accoutred, we started in good time from the gate of the caravanserai. Our progress through the streets attracted a considerable amount of attention, but we were not molested in any way. If any of the ragamuffins of the city showed an inclination to be rude or insulting, they were soon compelled to be more mannerly by the whips

of the imperial police. After a short walk under the shade of the trees growing by the roadside, we found ourselves in the crowded avenue leading to the gate of the palace. Our progress was now necessarily very slow. The nearer we got to the gate leading into the palace grounds, the more the road was thronged with the great nobles on elephants, on horses, and in palanquins, hurrying to the reception. As soon, however, as we succeeded in entering the avenue leading to the palace, we found that the strictest regularity was maintained by the emperor's officials. We had all to proceed in the order in which we had entered the gate, and no hurrying was allowed. We thus had leisure to feast our eyes on the beautifully-arranged and well-watered gardens on either side of the avenue. At last, moving thus onwards in slow and stately procession, we reached the reception-hall, and stood in the presence of the mighty emperor who arrogated to himself the proud title of Shah Jehan, which means King of the World.♥

The magnificence of the whole spectacle was far beyond anything that I had ever seen or dreamt of. The hall of audience

was open on three sides, and was extended into the courtyard in front by a magnificent pavilion, whose roof of purple velvet embroidered with gold was supported by thirty-eight great posts plated with silver and gold. At the far end we saw the famous throne, called the peacock throne because on its canopy stands a peacock of beaten gold set with all kinds of precious stones, and spreading out its tail, every eye in which is ornamented with a great sapphire. All things connected with the throne, even the pillars supporting the canopy and the parasols of crimson velvet on either side, were profusely decorated with sapphires, emeralds, rubies, pearls, and other precious stones worth the ransom of many kings

The throne beneath the canopy was about six feet long and four feet broad, so that to a European eye it looked more like a bed than a throne. On it sat cross-legged the great Emperor of India, with a cushion behind his back, looking for all the world like a parrot in a golden cage. His head was covered with a white turban, on the front of which gleamed an aigrette of priceless diamonds. The features of his face were re-

gular, but wanting in animation, as might be expected in one who was raised by his position far above the hopes and fears of ordinary men. He showed little sign of gratitude or interest as the greatest nobles of the land made their oriental obeisance to his majesty, and presented him with rich gifts of jewels and embroidery. Even when I—a stranger from a distant land, and dressed in a costume such as he had probably never seen till that day—made my salute before his throne in a manner very different from the humble obeisance of his own subjects, he seemed to take little notice of the contrast, and dismissed me and my followers from his presence without vouchsafing us a word of greeting.

I returned to the caravanserai somewhat crestfallen at the little attention I had received in the imperial court. The emperor, however, had noticed us more than his proud demeanour had given us reason to suppose; for ere nightfall one of his principal courtiers came to our lodging. His orders were to take us and our belongings to a guest-house near the palace, and to summon me to the honour of a private interview with the emperor on the following morning.

CHAPTER IV

THE PALACE GARDEN

EARLY on the following morning one of the officers of the court came to conduct me to the presence of the emperor, and brought me a rich oriental robe which I was directed to put on for the interview. The officer also instructed me that I was to leave my sword behind me, this being a rule invariably observed at private interviews with the emperor as a safeguard against assassination.

The officer then took me to the palace garden, where, he told me, I should find the emperor walking and enjoying the cool freshness of the morning. As we traversed the garden looking for the emperor, one extraordinary fact in the composition of the flower-beds struck my attention. A large number of the plots were in the shape of shields, in which red and yellow flowers were so arranged as to represent exactly the rampant red lion on a field of gold, the familiar coat-of-arms of Scotland. While I was racking my brains

to find an explanation of this singular circumstance, we suddenly turned round a corner and came upon the emperor.

He was evidently in a very bad temper, and was roundly abusing his gardener in a loud voice.

"What do you mean by it?" he exclaimed. "Here I have planted these trees with my own hand on a favourable day chosen by the astrologer, so that they should last a hundred years, and you have pulled them up and thrown them on the ground as if they were of no more value than a lot of cabbages."

Here he pointed to a row of young trees torn up by the roots and lying on the ground at his feet.

The gardener, who seemed to be a man of very independent character, instead of being frightened by the emperor's anger, boldly replied in a grumbling tone.

"Wallah, Wallah, that must needs be an admirable point of time which you have taken for these trees, and your astrologer must be a very wise man. A fig for his astrology! He said that being planted at the time he chose they would last for ever, and lo, they were planted yesterday at noon, and at evening they were plucked up."

“Silence! and show proper respect for the Emperor of the World,” cried Shah Jehan “You have been drinking too much of the wine of Shiraz, early as it is in the day”

He saw the force, however, of the gardener’s remarks, and laughed heartily at the speedy way in which the astrologer’s prediction had been falsified by the logic of facts

At this point he turned round and saw us. When we had given him the usual oriental salutation, he dismissed the gardener and the officer who had brought me, in order that our conversation might be private

“That old man,” he said, referring to the gardener, “is monarch in my garden, so that I can hardly call these fruits and flowers my own. It is well, however, to let him have his own way. He is very cross-grained, and nothing can be made of him when he is put out. And, after all, there is not such another gardener to be found in the world.”

Then followed a long conversation in which I had to do my best to explain the strength and policy of the kings of Europe, and what resistance they could offer to the Turks. His ignorant depreciation of the powers of Europe was remarkable. He thought Frangistan, as

he called Europe, was a small island of which the greatest monarch was the king of Portugal. Holland was, he thought, the next country in power. The kings of England, France, and Spain were in his eyes equal to the petty rajas in his own dominions. He had never heard of Scotland.

The emperor then asked me what had brought me to India, and what I proposed to do in that country. I told him my story, and he praised me for my loyalty to my king. When I informed him that I and my four followers wished for military service, he replied that he was in no special need of soldiers. If, however, we cared to face the cold of the mountainous regions to the north of India, we might accompany the great army that Aurangzebe had mustered for the subjugation of the Usbegs of Balkh and Badakshan. I replied that, as we had ourselves come from a cold climate, we were inured to the endurance of cold winds, snow, and ice, and that we should gladly exchange the torrid heat of India for the bitter cold of Central Asia.

“Very well,” said Shah Jehan. “You shall all go with Prince Aurangzebe to the north. I have now no more leisure to hear of the

strange land of Frangistan, and must return to the palace. If you wish to remain longer in the garden, you had better ask the gardener to take you round and show you all his treasures ”

So speaking he left me, after pointing out a distant part of the grounds, in which the head-gardener might be seen busying himself among the flowers, and giving directions to his subordinates

The gardener took no notice of my presence when I approached him, so it was necessary for me to speak first, and, in order to assuage his surliness, I made some remark in my best Urdu on the beauty of the garden. What was my surprise to hear him answer in the broadest Scotch

“ Ay, it’s a bonnie eneuch gairden, though I say it that shuldna say it; but, as sure as my name’s Maxwell, I’m thinkin’ you an’ me would rather hae a blink o’ the heather on the Scotch moors. No that I was aye sae fond o’ the Hielands and Hielanders,” he went on to remark “ I yince cursed a’ the Hielanders alike as thievin’ caterans. But, for a’ that, when I saw ye yestreen at the durbar walking up before the emperor sae

THE PALACE GARDEN

crouselly in yer braw kilt, I felt like
auld fule that I am! and kent that,
Hielandmen are Scotchmen, or at ony rate
I'm no for denying them the name in this far
awa' land "

I asked him how long he had been in India,
and what had led him to the country.

"I hae been here," he replied, "a matter
o' twenty year I was a gey chiel whan I
was young, and aye fechtin' wi' ither callants.
Ae day a laird's son misca'ed me and I gied
him a crack on his skull that gar'd him keep
a ceevil tongue in his mooth for the rest o'
his life; for he dee'd the next morning and
never spak anither word, guid or bad. But
his freens were amang the great anes o' the
land, and I had to flee the country to save
my life. When I got to Glasgōw, there was
a big ship there just starting for India, and
I thocht I micht as weel gang there as ony-
where else They tell't me at Surat that I
wad get guid wages as a gardener frae the
emperor at Delhi, so I cam' here, and here
I hae been ever since. A rowing stane, ye
ken, gathers nae fog The emperor pays me
weel, and gies me a hoose and servants to
attend on me. Like the centurion in the

Bible, I say unto this man 'go' and he goeth, and to that man 'come' and he cometh. I sometimes think I wad like to gang back to Scotland; but it's an awfu' lang journey, and I dinna ken hoo the emperor wad get on wi'oot me. So I just stay on and on, and I'm thinkin' that I'll dee here amang the heathen."

In return, I told him the circumstances that had led me to India, and declared my intencion of joining Aurangzebe's army, and fighting under his banner against the wild tribes of the north.

The gardener did not approve of my project. "Thae folk o' Balkh and Badakshan are fechtin' for their liberties, juist as our forebears did lang syne under Bruce and Wallace, and that dour prince Aurangzebe is juist anither Edward Langshanks. Oh man!" he cried; "if ye'd seen the bonnie Princess o' Balkh, as I hae seen her, greeting her een oot o' her heid because she's held a captive in Shah Jehan's palace, and canna win back to her hame, ye wad never think o' helping thae Moguls to tak her country and kill her brave faither."

His words made my heart beat tumultuously.

Who was this imprisoned princess? Might she not be the lady of my dreams? A northern princess—her people fighting for liberty—all seemed to coincide with what Sandy had seen in his vision. I implored the gardener to tell me more. Had he seen the princess? What was she like? Could he arrange that I should speak to her, or at least see her? I knew well how strictly the people of the country secluded their women from strangers, but I was prepared to run any risk rather than forego the smallest chance of fulfilling my destiny.

The old man was amused at my impetuosity. He had seen her once or twice with her attendants in the garden, and thought her the prettiest girl he had ever set eyes upon.

“They dinna mind being seen by an auld man like me, when they come every evening in the gloaming to tak’ a breath o’ caller air,” he said; “but it wad be anither thing if I had wi’ me such a braw young birkie as you are. They maybe wadna mislike seeing you themsels, but, gin the emperor heard tell o’t, neither the ane nor the tither o’ us wad hae lang to live”

His opposition only made me more obsti-

nate I tried to overcome him by prayers, threats, and bribes I swore that, if he would not help me, I would break into the garden that very night, whatever might be the consequences to him and to me At last he yielded to some extent

“They that wull to Cupar, maun to Cupar,” he grumbled “I’ll let ye oot by a side gate, and I’ll forget to sneck it If ye can wun in after sunset and hide yersell ahint yon bushes, ye’ll see a bonnier lass than ye ever saw in a’ Scotland But it will aiblins be the death o’ baith o’ us” -With these words he let me out by a postern gate, which opened on a lane running along the wall of the palace garden.

CHAPTER V

THE PRINCESS

MY small band of followers were delighted to hear of the favour with which I had been received by the emperor. They were glad of the prospect of going northward to a colder climate, more like that of their native land. I thought it better to tell them nothing of my conversation with the gardener, and of the audacious attempt I was going to make to get a sight of the captive princess.

It may be well imagined that the hours to sunset seemed very long. As the moon happened to be a little past the full, my best chance of reaching the postern unobserved was to go there about an hour after sunset, by which time the whole city would be shrouded in the darkness of night.

I dressed myself in a simple oriental costume not likely to attract attention, and armed myself with a dagger, in case I might have to defend myself against attack. Thus accoutred I started on my perilous expedition,

telling my comrades that they need not expect me back for an hour or two. The people of the city were too busy with their own affairs to pay me much attention now that the fairness of my face and hair was concealed by the darkness of approaching night.

By the good luck which always followed me when I walked in the path of my destiny, there was no one near to see me open the postern gate and glide silently into the garden. I immediately ensconced myself behind the bushes that Maxwell had pointed out to me, and there, with breathless eagerness, awaited the course of events.

The princess and her ladies were already in the garden. I could hear their voices and their footsteps as they paced up and down the gravel paths at no great distance from my hiding-place. It was sad to hear the melancholy tones of their voices, unrelieved by any outbursts of silvery laughter, such as might have been expected from young girls enjoying themselves in the cool of the evening in such a beautiful place. At last one of them, who by her bearing and tone of authority, was evidently the princess, motioned the other two to stand apart, and walked with

slow, sad steps towards the place where I was concealed. When she was quite close to me, she stood still, and, fixing her eyes on the Great Bear, that shone over her northern home, covered her face with her hands, and sobbed as if her heart would break.

Who could ever see a woman weeping without being deeply moved? Such insensibility was certainly no part of my nature. Besides, everything tended to work up my feelings of sympathy to the highest pitch. Although I could hardly see her in the darkness, with the intuition of love I could divine that she was young and beautiful. She stood before me as the embodiment of the dreams of my destiny. Above all, she and I were alike strangers in a strange land, bound together by the invisible links of the chain of destiny. From that moment, even before I had seen her beauty, I determined to be her true knight, and vowed to devote my life to her service.

The flood of emotion that overwhelmed my soul did not allow me to be silent. In earnest tones I told her that I was present as a friend, and implored her for her sake and my own not to reveal my presence. Her first impulse when she heard the voice of a man

was to call her attendants. But she controlled herself, and asked me who I was, and how I had come to violate the privacy of the imperial gardens.

I told her that I was a traveller from distant Frangistan¹, and that my destiny had brought me to India to release her from captivity, and restore her to her father's palace, or die in the attempt.

"Flee with me now!" I exclaimed. "The gate of the garden behind me is open. You will be treated with all the honour due to your noble birth, your beauty, and your distress. The swords of myself and my four followers will defend you to the death. Make a bold dash for liberty, and leave the result to the higher powers who guide the destinies of men."

Just at this moment the rising moon, which had hitherto been concealed by the thick foliage of a mango-tree, surmounted the screen of leaves and shone upon her face.

It was a face of surpassing loveliness, such as my feeble pen need not essay to describe. Her eyes were blue, and her splendid coronal of hair was of the deepest auburn. From the

¹ Frangistan = Europe

grace and ease of her movements it might easily be inferred that she had lived a free life in the open air, and not been secluded all her life within the walls of the harem. Her complexion was remarkably fair. There was just the slightest tinge of brown to betoken her oriental birth and descent. In stature she was very tall for a woman, especially for a woman of the East. The regularity of her features was such that her profile had the severe line of beauty of a Greek statue. As she stood before me in the moonlight, she revealed herself to my enraptured eyes as fair as Emily, when, on a morning of May, herself "fresher than the May", she was seen by the imprisoned Palamon in the garden of Theseus gathering white and red flowers to make a garland for her yellow hair, or as Joan Beaufort in the garden of Windsor Castle when she inspired with love and poetry the heart of the noblest of the ill-starred Stuart line.

Through her tears she smiled sweetly at my impetuosity and at the recklessness of my proposal. Then, with wisdom and kindly forethought she bade me remain where I was in concealment, lest any eye should see me in the garden, the result of which would have

been speedy death for myself, my followers, and Maxwell, who had connived at my entrance into the garden.

"I do not need to see you," she said. "You must be the Frank who appeared at the imperial durbar in striped clothes such as were never seen before in India. Now, few words will suit our needs best. I accept the help that you so generously offer. But let us act warily. My native land is far away, and many hundred miles of the Mogul's empire intervene between it and Delhi. If we tried to escape now, we should be very quickly captured. Nor is it necessary to make any such rash attempt. My honour is safe as long as I am under the imperial protection. I go as a hostage with Aurangzebe, who is marching to invade and effect the conquest of my country. When I arrive there, it will be time to try and escape from my captivity. If you can contrive also to travel northward with Aurangzebe's army, you may help me. Till then farewell."

~~Remaining obediently in my place of confinement, I begged her to give me some token as a pledge of the bond between us.~~

~~"Delay no longer," she cried~~ "Every



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"SHE GRACIOUSLY TOOK A RING FROM HER FINGER AND FLUNG
IT SO THAT IT FELL AT MY FEET"

moment you stay here may be fraught with death I myself must rejoin my comrades "

But ere she turned away, she graciously took a ring from her finger and flung it deftly, so that it fell at my feet

I eagerly picked up the pledge and hurried from the garden

CHAPTER VI

AURANGZEBE'S ADVANCE

THE scene of my story must now change from the hot plains of Central India to the cooler mountainous region of Cabul, to which the army of Aurangzebe advanced without encountering any opposition. The forces of the Great Mogul seemed to me better fitted for pompous and leisurely procession through a friendly and level country than for active warfare against mountaineers. They were strong in numbers, if numbers could be regarded as a proper measure of strength. But I could not help thinking that in certain circumstances the numbers would prove a source of weakness. For the army appeared to my eyes more like a moving city than a military force, when I considered the multitude of silk and cotton tents, kitchens, baggage, women, elephants, camels, oxen, waiting-men, porters, foragers, victuallers, and merchants of all sorts that accompanied us. I felt sure that if I could have got in the rear of such an army with a

thousand of my light-footed clansmen, I could very soon have thrown the whole unwieldy mass into a state of wild terror and almost inextricable confusion.

Such was the army that I and my comrades joined at Peshawur and accompanied through the defile of the Khyber Pass to Cabul. We did not, however, enlist as soldiers under the banner of Aurangzebe, as had been my original intention. The pledge I had given to my princess might at any moment render it necessary that we should take hostile action against the Moguls; so, instead of swearing military oaths of obedience to the prince, we accompanied the force as travellers who wished to go through Central Asia to the kingdom of Muscovy. In this guise we were allowed to proceed unmolested as far as Cabul. In spite of our fair skin, we did not attract much attention in the enormous and motley crowd that accompanied the army on its march.

At Cabul Aurangzebe united his fresh troops with the dispirited forces of his younger brother Murad, who for many months had been virtually besieged in that city, and had been reduced to great straits for want of provisions owing to the audacious incursions of

the Usbeg light horsemen, often led by their king in person. When Aurangzebe took the command of the united Mogul armies, the tables were completely and suddenly turned. Soon after his arrival he sent out a large body of light cavalry to punish the Usbeg marauders. The measure was signally successful. In a sharp skirmish that ensued the Usbegs had the misfortune to lose their gallant king and leader, the father of my princess, who was shot through the heart by a random arrow.

This untoward event entirely paralysed the national resistance. The dead king left no sons behind him, and his only daughter, the princess to whom I had vowed my service, was a captive in the power of Aurangzebe. Such being the case, the leadership of the Balkh armies and a hope of the crown were given to Nazir Khan, a cousin of the king's and a warrior of some repute. But he was by no means the choice of the whole nation. Many of them insisted that the throne belonged to the captive princess, whom they loved for her own sake and for the sake of her gallant father. The disunion due to these contending claims was cunningly fostered by Aurangzebe who now represented himself as

the supporter of the rights of the Princess Zohra, the legitimate heir to the throne

In the circumstances Nazir Khan determined to strengthen his position by winning a great victory over the invaders. Departing from the policy of the late king, who had avoided large engagements and waged with brilliant success a guerilla warfare of skirmishes and surprises, he collected almost all his followers into one large body and took up a position in front of Aurangzebe's advance-guard. Had he attacked at once, he might have won a great victory. But he delayed and gave Aurangzebe, who was commanding in person, time to call up reinforcements. When the reinforcements arrived, the Moguls were so superior in number to their opponents that they were able to send a large body of men round the left of the enemies' position to threaten their rear.

Nazir Khan ought now to have recognized his false step and retired. But he was one of those obstinate men who prefer to persevere in a mistaken course rather than confess their error by altering their plans. He delivered his attack, but it was successfully repulsed. The Usbeks were then compelled, by the pre-

sence of the Moguls on their flank and rear, to beat a precipitate retreat, in which many of them were cut off and either killed or captured. A like evil fate dogged the footsteps of Nazir Khan in all his military enterprises. The Usbegs were again and again defeated, till at last they gave up all resistance in the open field, and retired moodily northward towards the River Oxus, or took refuge in the inaccessible mountain regions of the Hindu Kush. Aurangzebe took firm possession of the passes between Cabul and the Usbeg territory, and beyond them became absolute master of most of the country to the south of the cities of Balkh, Khulm, Kunduz, and Khanabad. He was now said to be making leisurely preparations for the capture of those cities, which would complete the destruction of Usbeg independence.

CHAPTER VII

IN CABUL

WHILE these operations were going on I remained in Cabul, so that I might be ready to take the first opportunity that might present itself of delivering the princess from captivity. Twice a day, always at the same hour, I passed under the wall of that part of the fortified palace called the Bala Hissar, in which I had ascertained that she was confined. This I did partly from a natural desire to be near my mistress, and partly that she might see that I was waiting eagerly for a favourable opportunity and had not forgotten my promise.

But what could I do? The position seemed almost hopeless, when I considered the care with which she was guarded, and the strength of the wall of the palace in which she was imprisoned. For a long time I could not even determine the window of the apartment that had been assigned to her. One night, however, as I passed under the wall, I heard a

slight but sharp metallic clink against my helmet, and a silver button fell at my feet. I picked it up, and without a moment's delay passed on my way. With what eagerness did I scan the precious token as soon as I could do so without fear of being observed! With what joy did I recognize, engraved on the surface of the button, the winged dragon, the well-known device of the royal family of Balkh! Judging by my position at the time when the button struck my helmet it was easy to determine the window from which it had been dropped on my head. Thus a most important step had been achieved. I now knew for certain the room in which the princess was confined, and had the satisfaction of knowing that it was not more than fifty feet above the ground.

The next thing to do was to devise a means of communicating with the princess. I soon thought of a plan that proved successful in a famous old story often told me by my nurse in the days of my childhood. If I could manage to carry it into effect, I should not only be able to inform the princess of my plans, but also at the same time give her the means of escaping from her prison. I procured

a silken thread, long and slight and strong, and a powerful-looking black beetle. Having attached the thread to the beetle, and put both in my pocket, and taking with me a thick cord and a strong rope sixty feet long, I proceeded to the palace wall on a dark night. Fortune so far favoured my plans that there was no one in sight; indeed it was such a dark, misty night that, if anyone had been within twenty yards of me, he would not have been visible. So I took my beetle out of my pocket, and smeared his nose with fragrant butter. My plan, as the reader may have divined, was to send the beetle up to the window with the silk thread, so that the princess might draw up the thick cord by the silk thread, and finally, by the thick cord, the strong-rope. According to the story which put the idea into my head, the beetle, enticed onwards by the smell of butter on its nose, would go straight up the wall in the direction in which it was started. My beetle, however, to my great disappointment, proved contumacious, and refused to follow its nose in the direction I wished it to take. Again and again I pointed its head straight for the window, and, as often as I let it go, it turned to

the right or the left, no doubt finding hope of butter and of escape from the captivity of the silken thread in whichever direction it turned. I soon gave up the attempt in despair, and returned to my lodging, cursing my folly in putting such trust in old wives' tales.

When my comrades saw my dejected looks they were eager to know what depressed me, and I told them the whole story, giving them leave to laugh at my childishness as much as they liked. Instead of laughing at me, they put their heads together and tried to think of some other means of accomplishing my object.

"Could we not climb the wall?" said my foster-brothers.

I told them that the wall was so smooth that it hardly afforded a foothold for a cat, and that even a bare-footed Highlander could not hope to climb it.

"Perhaps Donelly might shoot the silk thread into the window," Colin suggested.

We all laughed at him. How could the silk thread escape being broken by the discharge of the gun, and how could we prevent the whole city from being alarmed by the noise of a shot fired in the middle stillness of the night?

Colin hung his head and muttered something about the disadvantage of noisy fire-arms as compared with the bows and arrows used by our ancestors.

At the mention of bows and arrows Donnelly pricked up his ears

“Give me a bow and arrow,” he exclaimed, “and by St Patrick it won’t be long before I land an arrow in the window!”

He then explained that in his boyhood, in the wild west of Ireland, he had become expert in the use of bows and arrows long before he knew that there were such things as guns and pistols in the world

On hearing this my spirits rose again as high as they had before been low. On the following day we procured a good bow and arrows in the bazaar, and at the dead of night Donnelly and I repaired to the wall beneath the princess’s window. M’William and my two foster-brothers stationed themselves at some distance, but within hearing, so that, if their presence should be required, they could come to our assistance.

I had never really put much confidence in the beetle, although, for want of a better device, I had tried what the insect could do

for me. This time I approached the imprisoning palace with far better hopes, for I knew that Donelly was no boaster, and I trusted that the correctness of eye that made him so deadly with his matchlock would also enable him to shoot his arrow straight to the mark. Also the window was large. His first shot was, however, unsuccessful. The arrow struck the masonry below the window, and fell at our feet with its point blunted. Perhaps the darkness of the night made it difficult to hit the mark, or the slight silken thread kept the arrow down. At his next shot Donelly aimed at a point above the window. This time he was successful. The sound made by the arrow told us that it had struck the wood of the closed shutters, and the fact that it did not fall proved that it had stuck there. We passed a few moments of intense suspense, fearing that the sound might not have been heard, or that it might have been heard by the wrong person. Presently the window opened, and first the silk thread, then the cord, and finally a ladder of ropes were pulled up. To the last I attached a short note, merely containing the words: "To-morrow at the same hour." Sending this missive was a risk, and might

have cost us all our lives, if the arrow had been discovered by anyone else but the princess, or one of her own attendants. However, the risk was worth running. If the arrow and its accompaniments had fallen into the wrong hands, our enterprise might almost be regarded as hopeless, and could not be made much worse by the discovery of the note. If, on the other hand, things had gone right so far, the note gave a fair chance of achieving the release of the princess, at least a better chance than we had hoped for since our arrival at Cabul.

CHAPTER VIII

ESCAPE FROM THE BALA HISSAR

NEXT morning, from the earliest dawn, we listened apprehensively to every approaching footstep. Our fears, however, were agreeably disappointed, and after two or three hours had passed, and we still found ourselves alive and free, we began to prepare for the second step of our enterprise. The chief point was to secure adequate means of conveyance for the princess and her two ladies, so that they might be able to travel quickly and comfortably through the rough country lying between Cabul and Balkh.

Horses, mules, camels, or donkeys had to be bought for the conveyance of the ladies by day, and tents to shelter them at night. Unfortunately our expenses on the way to Cabul, had almost exhausted my limited stock of rupees. I had little money and less credit, and in Cabul, as in most other places in the world, nothing can be got for nothing. I deter-

mined, however, to visit a great Jewish money-lender in the market-place, and see if he could be persuaded by any means to lend me what I wanted

When I entered his shop the old gray-bearded usurer kindly offered me a seat, and gave me a little cup of black Arabian coffee, before he would allow me to tell my business. After I had drunk the refreshing draught, I informed him that I wanted him to lend me a thousand rupees. He asked me what security I had to give, to which I could only reply that the word of a gentleman was as good as a bond.

“My dear young gentleman,” he suavely replied, “if I had gone on the principle of lending money to all who were willing to promise to repay me on their word of honour as gentlemen, or even by the sacred water of the Ganges, or by the beard of the prophet, I should long ago have been reduced to the state of a borrower like yourself, instead of being, as I now am, the richest man in Cabul.”

I tried to make something out of his evident vanity. “Surely,” I said, “such a rich man as you would not feel the want of a

thousand rupees, for which I will repay five thousand rupees as soon as I have the power to do so."

"And when will that be, I wonder? You look like a man of war, and I expect you are just going off to the fighting as quick as you can. If you stay in the rear, you won't make much out of the wars. If you go to the front and get your head cut off, what becomes of my good thousand rupees. No, no, my son, stay where you are till my next caravan goes to India, and I'll enrol you among the troopers that escort it and give you good pay. For, after all, I know something of men's looks, and you have an honest face; but, for all that, I would not trust you with one thousand, or even a hundred rupees, without security."

I could think of nothing more to say, and in my perplexity, without knowing what I was doing, began to turn round on my finger the ring that the princess had given me at Delhi. The old man noticed the big red stone in it, and said:

"That's a pretty ring you've got. If you like, I'll lend you fifty rupees on it."

My temper had been irritated by the helplessness of my position, and when the usurer

coolly proposed to take from me the ring that my dear mistress had given me, I burst into a passion, and cried out:

"How dare you insult me, old dotard? Know that I value that ring so highly that I would not part with it for ten thousand rupees!"

"Oh, my son," he replied, "be not angry with me. How could I guess that you, who came to me like a beggar to borrow a poor thousand rupees, knew the value of the beautiful ruby in your ring. Come now, if you leave it with me, instead of fifty rupees I will advance you one hundred pieces of gold."

The old man did not know why I attached so much value to the ring, and not unnaturally attributed my impassioned words to knowledge of the intrinsic value of the gem. By this little misunderstanding of his, therefore, I first got an inkling of the pecuniary value of the princess's gift, which I had previously looked upon only by the light of love. But I already knew enough of oriental methods of bargaining to be convinced that even now the usurer had not risen to the real value of the ring. So I determined to test him, and said.

"If you want this ring, you must pay me at once five hundred pieces of gold. Otherwise the ruby in it is destined to deck the tiara of the great prince Aurangzebe."

The old man smiled a smile intended to express contemptuous pity for the depths of ignorance of precious stones revealed by my remark.

"The stone," he said, "is worth not more than a hundred pieces of gold. I will give you another gold mohur for the metal of the ring. Well, as you are in want of money, and God tells us to succour the distressed, I will even give you a hundred and twenty gold mohurs for it. If you are foolish enough to refuse such an offer, you will repent of your folly to the end of your life. Besides, let me tell you that Aurangzebe is a pious prince and cares not for such gewgaws."

All the time I could read in the twinkling of his foxy eyes his intense eagerness to possess the ring. So I got up from the seat, and as coolly as I could said to him:

"Very well! As you can't afford to give me my price, I'll take my goods to a better market."

So saying I bade him farewell, and walked

away from his shop. After all, if need be, I could swallow my pride and come back for the one hundred and twenty gold pieces he had offered me. To my relief he immediately jumped up and began to raise his offer gradually by five and ten pieces of gold at a time, and followed me as I walked away, always enhancing his offer. To all he could say I only replied nothing, or "My price is five hundred pieces of gold"; and at last, seeing I was inexorable, he yielded, and I returned to the shop. There he slowly counted me out the five hundred pieces. Many I rejected as underweight, but at last, after a good deal of haggling over doubtful coins, I took away a bag of five hundred gold pieces, good, bad, or indifferent, which, however, were amply sufficient to provide all that was wanted for our journey.

My chief purchases were three horses to carry the princess and her two attendants, and two mules to carry provisions and other necessities for what might prove a long journey. To ensure secrecy I hired no attendants of any kind, knowing well that every man of the country I might engage would be a possible traitor. For such is the

evil reputation of the Afghans that their own proverbs warn you not to converse with them unless you have a stone concealed in your hand.

IX

CHAPTER IX

FLIGHT FROM CABUL

AT the appointed hour of the night we started for the Bala Hissar. The city was silent as the grave, except for the watchmen calling out in their monotonous drawl. "I extol the perfection of the living King, who sleepeth not nor dieth." We ran into one of them, who exclaimed to us: "Attest the Unity of God", to which I immediately gave the appropriate reply "There is no deity but God", which, according to the simple notions of Mahometans, is a sufficient guarantee that the speaker does not intend to commit any unlawful action.

After this rencontre we moved on rapidly and silently to the palace wall, under which there were, luckily for us, no watchmen to interfere with our proceedings.

The great wall frowned darkly above us, and for a few anxious moments there was no sign to indicate that our presence had been

observed. Then we heard the shutters of the window slowly open, and the rope-ladder was let down. We fastened the end tightly to pegs fixed in the ground at a sufficient distance from the wall to prevent the ladies as they descended from coming into contact with it

The rope-ladder was scarcely fastened when a female form began to descend. It was the princess, who herself was the first to trust herself to the unsteady ladder. When she reached the ground, she rewarded me with a look of gratitude from her beautiful eyes, and I silently kissed her hand.

We now waited for the princess's ladies to come down; but there was an annoying delay of five or ten minutes before Ayesha, the younger of the two, descended. She told us that the elder waiting-lady, who was somewhat inclined to be stout, had flatly refused to trust herself to the frail rope-ladder. She much preferred to remain in confinement rather than slip out of the window into the darkness of night by a ladder of ropes. I offered to go up the ladder and try to persuade her, but was dissuaded from doing so. The princess and Ayesha assured me that she

was in such a state of fright that it would be useless to attempt to move her from her resolution. Besides, every moment was of importance. So we determined to leave the timid lady where she was and make for the gates. Afterwards we found that she had done us good service. On the following morning she declared that the princess was indisposed, and for a long time no one was allowed to enter the apartment. Of course suspicions were eventually aroused and the deceit was discovered. But in the meantime we had got some twelve hours' start of our pursuers.

After we had thus succeeded in delivering the princess out of her captivity in the Bala Hissar, the next thing was to get outside the walls of the city, the gates of which were opened before dawn, so as to enable travellers to make an early start and advance as far as possible on their way before the sun was high. Unfortunately it was still an hour before the first faint glimmer of dawn would appear in the sky.

We could not stay where we were, and I proposed that we should return to my lodgings and wait there till the time of departure

arrived. The princess, however, told me that she had other friends in the city, who, like ourselves, had been waiting for a favourable opportunity to secure her release. The headquarters of her friends was at a distance of half a mile, in the house of an old mullah,¹ who would not only give us shelter but also aid our flight with all the resources at his disposal. So to his house we made our way through the darkness under the guidance of the princess.

When we had knocked at the door, at first gently and afterwards more loudly, a head was thrust out of a window immediately above the door, and an angry voice bade us begone. The princess replied.

“Tell thy master that strangers ask admission in the name of Allah, the most merciful, and of the holy pir² who lives on the skirts of the cleft mountain.”

This appeal acted as a charm. The door was quickly opened by the mullah's own hands and we were taken into his dwelling.

The joy depicted on the old man's counten-

¹ Mullah = Mahometan priest.

² Pir = saint.

ance at the sight of the princess was pleasant to look upon

“And hast thou escaped, my daughter,” he exclaimed, “from the grasp of the greedy Moguls, and do I see thee once more safe and sound and free? But there is little time for words. Thou art still within the walls of the hostile city, and much has to be done before I can see thee seated on the throne of thy fathers. What are thy plans, and who are these fair-skinned strangers who have brought thee to me?”

In a few words she explained the situation, telling the mullah how we had met in the imperial garden of Delhi, how I had devoted myself to her service, and how she had escaped from the Bala Hissar. Then the mullah, turned to me and asked me whether I considered that I had done my part, or whether I still proposed to follow the fortunes of the princess.

“Nothing but death,” I replied, “shall ever part me from the lady to whom I have devoted my heart and my sword.”

“And the others?” he enquired.

“They have bound themselves to follow my fortunes, and will go wherever I lead

them. Wait till they are tried in the hour of peril and you will see how brave and faithful they are."

This being settled, we laid our heads together to devise ways and means for our northward flight. I soon saw how hopelessly incomplete my arrangements had been. How could I expect to find my way to Balkh without a guide, even if we could succeed in evading the Mogul troops on the way? How could we even hope to obtain egress from the jealously-guarded gates of Cabul?

The friendly mullah had foreseen all these difficulties and provided for them beforehand. His trouble had been to get the princess out of the Bala Hissar, and this we had solved for him. He had long had everything prepared for the flight of the princess if only she could escape from her prison. He had in his service guides who knew well the route we had to traverse, and two fine camels with palanquins, called *cajawas*, hanging on either side like asses' panniers, for such is the manner in which ladies can travel most conveniently and comfortably through Central Asia. Most important of all, he had a passport for a caravan of pilgrims to go southward through the

Mogul Empire to Surat, that being the port at which Central Asian pilgrims usually embarked for the holy Mahometan city of Mecca. There was no time to be lost. The two ladies were quickly seated so as to balance each other in the two cajawas on either side of the better of the two camels. The second camel, being unnecessary, was left behind. I mounted on one of the horses I had bought, my two foster-brothers on the two others. Two strong country-bred ponies were provided by the mullah for Donelly and M'William. The two mules, bearing provisions for the journey, were entrusted to the guidance of two grooms, who knew the country well and could guide us on our way. Another trusty man of Balkh rode the camel which had the honour of carrying the princess and her lady. All this was quickly arranged, so that we reached the gate of the city just when the first glimmer of dawn began to be visible.

As our passport described us as pilgrims going through India to Mecca, we had to leave the city by the southern gate, which, indeed, we should have chosen in any circumstances, in order to disarm suspicion, as being the egress farthest from the road to

Balkh. The gatekeeper scanned our passport, and read it, or pretended to read it, by the dim light of his flickering lamp. After taking note of our numbers, sex, and appearance, he opened the gate. We passed through and were free.

CHAPTER X

OVERTHROW OF A GAY CAVALIER

WHAT joy it was to be once more outside the city, to know that the princess of my heart had been delivered from her prison by my efforts, and that, if the same good fortune attended us, we should restore her to her friends, and to the kingdom that was hers by right!

No doubt many difficulties and dangers had yet to be surmounted before all this could be achieved, but I could no longer distrust Fortune after the wonderful way in which she had favoured us so far. I felt that my star was in the ascendant, and that, whatever might be before us in the immediate future, success would crown our enterprise in the end. If not, it would be no inglorious lot to die sword in hand for the right of the fair princess to whom I had devoted my life and service.

After we had left the gate of Cabul about

a mile behind us, we had to fetch a compass and get round by cross paths to the route from the northern gate leading towards Balkh. This took some time, and we feared that our pursuers might already be on the northern road to intercept us. To our great relief we found the course clear. There seemed to be no one going our way, but we met imperial messengers hurrying southwards to carry to India the news of the latest success of Aurangzebe, who still seemed to be carrying everything before him.

One of these was a gay cavalier mounted on a splendid bay Arab steed, and attended by half a dozen Mogul troopers. He had a rich turban on his head, and his polished shield and cuirass shone brightly in the morning sun as he advanced to meet us at the head of his men. In good sooth I had seldom seen a finer man on a finer horse. If he was a messenger bearing tidings, he would seem to have been in no hurry to deliver them, for he stopped on the way to interrogate us. We told him that we were peaceful merchants on our way to Badakshan.

"Well," he said, "I must see what goods you are taking northwards. For your fair

skins are suspicious, and I should not wonder if you were in league with our enemies "

With this he drew up his horse near our mules, and bade us tell him what their pack-saddles contained. Then, without paying much attention to our replies, he approached the camel which bore the princess and her lady.

"And what have we in these cajawas?" he asked.

I told him that they contained two ladies belonging to our party. He would not believe, or affected not to believe, my statement.

"Cajawas supposed to carry ladies have often ere now," he said, "been found to carry weapons of war for our enemies."

"Is not the great army of Aurangzebe between us and the Usbegs? Surely," I said, "if we were conveying munitions of war to your enemies, we should not be coming by way of Cabul "

Without vouchsafing any answer he stretched out his rude hand and pulled away the veil from the cajawa of the princess. When he thus suddenly revealed to view the face of my mistress, rendered not less lovely by the flush of righteous anger with which it was

overspread, he exclaimed in astonishment and admiration

“By Allah,” he exclaimed, “beauty like thine was never meant for the harem of a silly trader! Thou must return with me to Cabul, for nothing upon earth shall prevent thee from becoming mine”

Although I knew well how essential it was that we should avoid the danger and delay of a quarrel so near Cabul, I had with difficulty withheld my hand when I saw the cavalier’s presumption. Still, though raging furiously within, I spoke calmly, and humbly besought him to let us go peacefully on our way. Treating my prayer with contemptuous silence, he ordered his followers to turn the camel’s head to Cabul.

Our trusty camel-driver, perceiving their intention, immediately urged his beast along the road to the north. The camel trotted on for some distance, followed by three of the Moguls, who vainly called upon the camel-driver to stop. In the meantime the cavalier and his two remaining followers stood waiting for the others to overtake and bring back the camel. As they stood with their eyes turned in the direction of the pursuit, I gave a secret

signal to my followers to prepare for action, and rode close up behind the unsuspecting cavalier. Before he knew that I had any hostile intention, I had thrown my arms round him in such a way that it was impossible for him to draw sword or dagger. His spirited horse reared in alarm, and in the struggle we both fell together on the soft sand. But my arms were still round his, and as I was much the stronger man of the two, he was completely at my mercy.

My comrades had in the meantime been equally successful in overpowering the two Moguls, and M'William was now binding them hand and foot with a seaman's dexterity in the tying of knots. He next came to me, and tied up my captive in a similarly effective manner. The cavalier was at first speechless with indignation at the ignominious plight to which he had been reduced by those whom he contemptuously regarded as base traders. When he found his voice, he used it with effect in denouncing vengeance on his captors.

"I'll soon stop his hullabaloo," exclaimed Donnelly, who proceeded to unroll our captive's turban, with the intention of twisting it round his mouth and smothering his curses. As he

unrolled the turban, many ducats that had been concealed in its folds fell on the ground before us, and in one of the innermost recesses we found a small bag containing rubies and a communication in the Persian character, written on a minute piece of parchment

Before we had time to examine them, the princess and her camel had rejoined us. The three Moguls, who had been trying to catch it, had fled precipitately when one of them happened to turn round and discovered the fate that had befallen their leader and their two comrades

I handed to the princess the despatch, together with the precious stones, which were probably the proceeds of the plunder of some palace or rich shrine belonging to her countrymen. It was not so easy to decide what was to be done with our three captives. And yet something had to be decided on quickly with regard to them, for delay was dangerous. The three mounted fugitives might soon bring an overwhelming force to their rescue, if we lingered on the spot. No doubt the safest plan would have been to act on the principle of that arch traitor Pym: "Stone dead has no fellow." But even if such a course had com-

mended itself to me, which it did not, the tender eyes of the princess could never have been polluted by the sight of such a murder in cold blood

“Leave them as they are!” she exclaimed; “and trust that Allah will neither allow them to be eaten by wild beasts nor to effect our destruction by too speedy an escape from their bonds.”

So we left them there, lying in the dust by the roadside. As it happened, we had not proceeded many miles before we met some peaceful wayfarers who would, we knew, release them. Of course we took with us the three horses which our captives had ridden. The beautiful, high-bred bay Arab of the gay cavalier I appropriated to my own use, and as I sprang on his back, I felt sure that he was one of the best steeds I had ever mounted, although his beautiful legs, slender as a gazelle's, might seem to be hardly strong enough to bear my weight.

Our first day's march was through the beautiful gardens that lie to the north of the city. In spite of our danger and anxiety we looked with delight and admiration on the number and variety of fruit-trees that

grew on either side of our path—peaches, plums, apricots, pears, apples, quinces, cherries, walnuts, mulberries, pomegranates, and vines. We halted at mid-day in one of these gardens which was watered by a crystal stream. The refreshing murmur of the running water and the shade of the fruit-trees were delightful after the heat and hurry of our flight, which we had maintained for five hours without intermission. Delightful also were the notes of the nightingales, blackbirds, thrushes, and doves that sang on the boughs and reminded us of the land of our birth. Delightful was the flavour of the pears of Samarcand, fresh culled from the boughs above us. But most delightful of all it was to see the princess seated in our midst, and know that by our help and the guidance of God she had so far escaped her enemies.

After we had refreshed ourselves with meat and drink and a short rest, the princess called me to her. She held in her hand the despatch that had been taken from the turban of the Mogul cavalier. After she had first, in answer to my earnest enquiry, assured me that she was not exhausted by the rapidity with which we had travelled, I asked her

whether the parchment contained any news of importance. She told me that it did. It was, she said, a despatch from Prince Aurangzebe to the Mogul governor of Cabul, telling him to forward all reinforcements in the direction of Badakshan, for that the plan of the campaign was first to reduce Faizabad and the other cities of Badakshan, and after their capture to move westward and complete the conquest of the Usbeg dominions by taking the city of Balkh. This was most important information. It meant that the national resistance of the Usbeks was not entirely broken. Evidently Aurangzebe had recognized that he was attempting to do too much all at once, and found it necessary to concentrate his forces in one portion of the country to be conquered. Since he had chosen, as the scene of his next military operations, the eastern Usbeg country round Faizabad, there was every reason to believe that few Mogul troops would be left on the western route to Balkh. We therefore immediately determined to abandon our intention of following the shortest route, which went due north through Charikar, for that, being henceforward the only line of communi-

cation between Aurangzebe and his base at Cabul, would be strongly occupied by the enemy. By marching due west along the Candahar road for twenty miles we could strike the caravan route from Candahar and Ghazni to Balkh, which would probably not be guarded by the Moguls, owing to the new plan of campaign. We therefore now directed our course westward, and after a ride of two or three hours once more turned northwards up the valley of the Cabul river towards its source at Sirchushma.

CHAPTER XI

WE MAKE FOR THE HINDU KUSH

THE valley of the river grew narrower and narrower as we came nearer to its source. We put up for the night at a village called Julrais, or "Running Water", from the two beautiful brooks which flowed through it. Here we found shelter in the house of a mullah, who gladly gave up his best apartment for the use of the princess and her lady. The rest of us found accommodation for ourselves and our animals in the surrounding outhouses. And glad we were to find shelter, for we were now getting into the mountainous country, and the night wind was bitterly cold.

In spite of the cold we made an early start, before the stars began to pale in the gray light of dawn, and proceeded with all the speed we could muster up the still narrowing valley. We pursued our course without adventure or serious obstacle to our

mid-day halting-place, and for some ten or twelve miles farther

At this point of our journey I was talking to the princess and congratulating her on the good speed we had made

"Yet, my knight," for so she deigned to call me, "we have many days' marches before us, and even if we reach Balkh, the Moguls may besiege and capture the city with their great army. Then I shall have to mourn not only my own captivity, but also the enslavement of my whole people. And you, my friend, what will be your fate when Aurangzebe has you in his power? He does not easily allow to escape out of his clutches those who oppose, and especially those who oppose successfully, his plans."

"Away with such thoughts, my lady," I replied. "Ere you become captive again, the Moguls will have to kill me and my four faithful followers. And we are not easily killed, for we, too, are the children of fortune. If Aurangzebe has an imperial destiny before him, I too have my fate to fulfil."

Then for the first time I told her of Highland, second sight, and of the vision of the future that had prevented me from yielding to

despair at Philiphaugh and on the Northern and Indian Oceans, and had led me from Surat to Delhi, and from Delhi to the snows of Central Asia. When I spoke of the princess bride I was destined to win, a blush suffused her beautiful cheek and she seemed to sigh. However, she archly replied:

“I thought that I was your lady and you were to be my knight for ever and aye. And now it appears I am only a stepping-stone by whom you hope to mount to the Princess of Muscovy owed you by destiny.”

“Nay, my lady—and my lady you will be as long as I breathe the upper air,—remember that you too are a northern princess. For you I live, for-you, if need be, I die. If I may not look so high—if it is presumption for me to expect your favour—I can at least have the satisfaction of being loyal for ever to the lady of my heart. Of this neither Fate nor Aurangzebe can deprive me.”

“My knight,” she replied, “link not your fortune too closely with mine. For my horoscope is a sad one, and I am doomed to die in a far distant land inhabited by strangers, who revere not the Holy Prophet and hardly know his name. Leave me, then, in time,

lest my unlucky star predominate over your fortunate one."

As she slowly uttered these sad words, a big tear trickled slowly down her fair cheek. I was strangely moved, and do not know what might have happened next if at this moment Duncan had not ridden up and whispered in my ear:

"I hear in the distance a sound like the clatter of horses' hoofs on the stony track behind us."

His ears had not deceived him. The trampling feet of horses were distinctly to be heard behind us, gradually becoming louder and louder, until at last we could see those who were following and probably pursuing us. They were between thirty and forty in number, and from the way in which they rode they appeared to be troopers.

The valley at this point was very narrow, and at some little distance in front of us I saw a place where the river passed between high cliffs, leaving along its banks only enough roadway for one cart. To this I ordered our cavalcade to make its way. When we arrived there we dismounted, and, seizing a solid country cart that happened to be pass-

ing, placed it sideways as a barrier across the narrow passage. By such means only could five men hope to withstand the onset of so many. Our horses we placed behind in charge of the camel-driver and muleteers.

I had vainly besought the princess to leave us and continue her northward flight. If the advancing horsemen were not enemies, we could, I said, soon rejoin her. If they were enemies, we could keep them at bay for a long time and perhaps so cripple them that they would have to abandon the pursuit. The noble lady refused to retire from the scene of danger, and to our surprise produced from her cajawa a long bow and some arrows, which she gave to me as weapons to aid in the common defence

“As a girl,” she said, “my warrior father taught me to use the bow and arrow, and I never go anywhere without my favourite weapon.”

As I had my pistols, I handed the bow and arrows to Duncan, who was a good archer. At the same time I told M'William and Colin to throw across the river the trunk of a fallen tree in case the enemy should try to force their way up its bed. It was no longer doubt-

ful that they were enemies, for they were now charging up the valley with their swords drawn, encouraging each other with warlike shouts. They were led by a captain on a black horse. As soon as we saw him clearly, we easily recognized him to be the gay cavalier whom we had discomfited and laid in the dust on the previous day. He had evidently soon obtained his release, reported the loss of his despatches, and been supplied with a strong body of cavalry so that he might recover the despatches and bring back the fugitive princess. ✓

CHAPTER XII

THE FIGHT BY THE RIVER

AT a distance of about a hundred yards they halted to breathe their horses before charging home. This was too good an opportunity for Donelly to let slip. He rested his musket on one of the cart wheels and took a steady aim. The bullet found its billet in the heart of one of the foremost horsemen, who rolled from his saddle to the ground. Enraged and alarmed at their comrade's fall, the whole body of cavalry now set spurs to their horses and charged furiously upon us as if they would sweep us from the face of the earth.

But when they came close up to us, they found that they were stopped by the insurmountable obstacle presented by the heavy country cart. At the same time Donelly, who had had time to reload, fired again. I fired one of my pistols, Colin, to whom I had given the other, did likewise, and Duncan shot two or three arrows in quick

succession. At such close quarters it was almost impossible to miss. Two more of our assailants dropped from their saddles, and one or two wounded horses pranced wildly about, mad with pain. M'William, who had charge of the defence of the river bed on our right, had no more deadly missiles than stones to hurl at those who tried to force their way up the rocky water-course. Little danger, however, seemed to threaten us in that quarter, as the rocky channel gave no safe footing for a horse's hoof. For some time they remained futilely hacking at the framework of the cart with their swords. But when we gave them a second volley they beat a hasty retreat, leaving five of their number dead or wounded on the ground in front of us. They did not, however, retire quickly enough to escape a parting shot from Donelly, which killed one of the horses. The trooper riding it disengaged himself from his fallen charger and ran away on foot.

So far all had gone well with us. But our position was still very dangerous. The rocky crags on either side of the pass were so high and steep that there was little likelihood of men from the central plains of India attempt-

ing to climb them. Our enemies might, however, get in our rear by making a long detour. They might bring us to our knees by simply remaining where they were, for, if we once left our strong position of defence, they could easily overtake us and ride us down.

It did not seem, however, to suit their leader's taste to play a waiting game. We could see him on his black horse going from one to another of his followers brandishing his sword and making fierce gesticulations. He was evidently encouraging them to venture on another charge, and after a few minutes his persuasions were successful. They once more arranged their ranks and charged down upon us with as much courage as they had shown in their first attempt. We on our side awaited their onset coolly and gave them an equally warm reception. Duncan, who had shot all his arrows away in the first attack, had succeeded in recovering two that were fixed in the body of a dead horse lying just outside the barricade.

The enemy a second time lost heavily by the discharge of our missiles, which we reserved until they were close upon us. Several of the

troopers were again killed or wounded. But their leader, followed by three of the boldest of his men, charged violently against the cart pole, which formed the weakest part of our defence. The pole broke clean off and fell at the feet of M'William, who, brandishing it like a club in his powerful hands, brought it down with tremendous force on the head of the last trooper who broke his way in. The man fell dead without a groan, and M'William stood in the gap behind him threatening a like terrible death to the next who might wish to venture in. No wonder the others paused on the threshold, fearing to encounter the gigantic fisherman. While they stood for a moment dumb and motionless with amazement, Colin rushed out and with his dagger stabbed one of them to the heart, rushing back hastily before his comrades could avenge his fall.

In spite of the death of these two men our position was now perilous in the extreme. Besides our enemies in front, we had now three inside our defences, and our wooden wall was broken, so that more might force their way in. M'William's giant form, however, stood in the gap and might make good the

passage for some time. So, leaving him and Donelly and my two foster-brothers to defend the front, I turned to meet the three enemies who had been carried past us for the moment by the violence of their charge and were now turning their horses' heads to attack our rear.

It seemed almost a hopeless task for one man on foot to defend himself against three on horseback. Fortunately my pistol was loaded. By a lucky shot I broke the sword arm of one of my assailants, and then, drawing my claymore and setting my back against a rock, I faced the other two. It would have gone hard indeed with me if my lady and the star of my destiny had not aided me in the hour of my need.

For some time the princess had been urging her camel-driver and the two guides who led the sumpter mules to take part in the fray. At first they refused, saying that they were not soldiers, and that it was their business to watch the camel and the mules and the horses. At last her eloquence and reproaches prevailed, and they came forward stealthily with long knives in their hands to stab or hamstring the horses of my assailants. So now those who had got round to our rear were

themselves unexpectedly exposed to a rear attack

The muleteers and camel-driver first concentrated their efforts upon the unwounded Mogul trooper, who was somewhat behind his leader. They sprang upon him unawares from behind, pulled him to the ground, and quickly and mercilessly despatched him with their long knives. They then went on with the intention of doing likewise to the trooper whom I had wounded, but he immediately turned his horse's head northward and fled.

Having done this my new auxiliaries rushed to the front, leaving me to dispose of the Mogul leader.

We had in the meantime crossed swords, he on his tall black charger, I on foot. He seemed to be a gallant cavalier, and therefore, as I parried his strokes, I called upon him to dismount from his horse and fight with me on equal terms.

"Besides," I added, "if you fight on horseback, I must try to disable your brave black steed, which I should be loth to do."

He did not disappoint the estimate I had formed of his character from his appearance and noble bearing. Leaping lightly from his

saddle he plied me with so many strokes of his sword in quick succession that it was not easy to parry them with my heavier claymore. I was very eager to finish the single combat quickly, for from the shouts behind me it was evident that the struggle round the cart at the mouth of the pass was still raging furiously, and I feared that any moment the enemy might force their way in. I accordingly took the first opportunity that presented itself and delivered a downright blow with all my strength at the head of my adversary. He opposed his sword to the descending blow, and steel met steel. My Andrea Ferrara proved stronger than his Damascus blade, which snapped off at the hilt. The blow fell with almost unabated force on his head-piece, which saved him from death. But he fell stunned on the ground.

I immediately rushed to join my comrades, whom I found hard pressed in the open passage between the bed of the stream and the front part of the cart. M'William was still brandishing his great club, but he was weary with the tremendous efforts he had made, and blood was flowing profusely from a wound in his side. Duncan's claymore was red with blood,

and Colin, whose claymore had broken, was fighting with a sword he had taken from the hand of a fallen enemy. The camel-driver and muleteer were mounted on the cart ready with their long knives to stab anyone who tried to climb over it. I noticed that one of them was wiping his blade on his coat. Donnelly was a foot or two in the rear rapidly loading his gun. The Moguls were charging at the open space with loud shouts but their approach was impeded by the corpses of their fallen comrades, and they evidently were in mortal terror of M'William's brandished club. All this I saw at a glance, and my heart leaped with joy to find that all was not yet lost. But my brave men were weary and could not much longer sustain the onslaught. In spite of the execution they had done, the odds in numbers were still nearly five to one against us, or three to one if we counted the two muleteers and the camel-driver. I rushed hastily to the front, and at the same moment Donnelly's musket laid low another of the enemy, upon whose fall they immediately drew back a little.

CHAPTER XIII

A PARLEY

I now determined to try the effect of a parley, which, if it did nothing else, would at least give Donelly's musket time to cool and afford a welcome respite to my exhausted men. Accordingly I sheathed my claymore and stepped forward a pace or two in advance, holding it by the middle as a sign that I had no hostile intentions. Two men on the other side, who had taken the command in the absence of their original leader, understood my meaning and motioned to their followers to draw back, an order which they obeyed with alacrity, indicating pretty plainly that they were weary of the desperate conflict. There was no fear of treachery, as our assailants had evidently no missile weapons of any kind. Had they been provided with such, it would have been utterly impossible for us to make a successful defence for such a long time. I took the precaution, however, of

keeping a distance of six feet between myself and the representatives of the enemy. Before advancing, I told Colin to reload my pistols, and whispered to Duncan that he might employ himself, if time allowed, in the manufacture of one or two arrows. As, however, Duncan had nothing he could make arrowheads out of, he coolly stepped forward and recovered two of the arrows he had already shot. When they saw him do this, the larger number of the enemy shouted out "treachery", and drew back to a still more respectful distance. They were evidently demoralized by their ill success, and, now that they were no longer sustained by the excitement of fighting, looked as cowed and spiritless as beaten curs. The knowledge of this enabled me to assume an air of superiority in the parley that now commenced.

"What do you mean," I asked, "by thus attacking peaceful traders as if you were robbers and not soldiers of a great king?"

"Are all these men wounded and slain," their spokesman asked in reply, "by peaceful traders? Were you peaceful traders when you carried away from Cabul the Princess of Balkh? Give up the princess and our leader

and we will allow you to proceed on your way ”

“Your leader,” I replied, “lies lifeless on the ground a little way up yonder stream. Such will be the fate of your whole company if you persist in fighting men from a far country who are far mightier than yourselves. As for the princess, she goes northwards to her home. You and the whole army of Aurangzebe had better turn back southward to India, or sure destruction will come upon you as soon as the snows of winter begin to fall ”

I spoke these words in a loud voice that they might be heard by all, and slowly, in order that there might be time to reload the firearms, and then I added

“Charge now once more, if you dare, and the five foremost of you will bite the dust ”

The two leaders, indignant at this bold defiance, called upon the others to charge, and I retired to our position. I at once levelled one pistol, Cohn the other, Donnelly his unerring musket, and Duncan aimed the scarce less fatal bow of the princess. The Moguls, seeing the certain death that awaited some of them

if they came near, stood still and refused to move a step forward

"See!" I exclaimed denisively, "your men are wiser than you. They know it is better to be live dogs than dead lions. Go, then, bury youi dead, and depart in peace if you ever desire to see again youi Indian homes."

My words produced a strange and totally unexpected effect. Four troopers from the hostile ranks set spurs to their horses and rode violently straight in our direction. Our fingers were on the triggers of our firearms and Duncan bent his bow. In another moment some of them would have been dead men. But suddenly, still riding hard, they took off their turbans as a sign of submission, and threw far from them the swords that they held in their hands, shouting at the top of their voices "We are Usbegs of Balkh! We are Usbegs of Balkh! Take us home with you to our dear native land"

On hearing these words we let them into our lines and heard their tale. They had been impressed some months before by the invading Mogul army and forced to join a regiment of horse stationed at Cabul. But all the time they served under the Mogul standards they

were determined to take the first opportunity of deserting. We had no reason to doubt their tale, so we provided them with swords taken from the dead Moguls who lay within or just beyond our barrier, and made them, on the naked blades of these swords, swear fealty to the princess.

Our enemies still stood before us irresolute at a distance of one or two hundred yards. They had originally numbered thirty-four men, but eleven now lay on the ground dead and mortally wounded. Their numbers had now been further reduced by the desertion of the four Usbegs, which made the numerical difference between the opposing forces less by eight than it had been before. Thus, we had now only to face nineteen men, several of whom were wounded. They had lost their leader, and no doubt the eleven men who had fallen were among the bravest of the band. With our late accession of strength we had little to fear from another attack. Even on the march they were not likely to molest us. So without further delay we made arrangements for the continuance of our journey northwards.

I was glad to find that my chivalrous

opponent, who had dismounted from his horse to fight me on foot, was not dead. He was now sitting up on the river bank, still dazed, but conscious. I gave him a drink of water from the pure snow-fed stream, by which he was much refreshed. On being asked whether he would prefer to keep the bay mare or the black horse, for I did not require both, he asked for the bay mare, to which he was devotedly attached. His selection suited me very well, for, although the bay mare was the more beautiful animal of the two, the black horse was bigger and stronger and more able to bear my weight. So, having had the bay mare brought to him, I myself mounted the black horse and rode up to the princess to ask her how she felt after the excitement and alarms of the hard fighting. Not till then did I learn that it was her exhortations that had moved the muleteers and camel-driver to come forward at the most critical point of the conflict.

"Then," said I, bowing low to my saddlebow, "I owe my life to you. For I should have had but a small chance of escaping death if I had had to fight alone and on foot against two horsemen."

“I would have done more than this,” she replied, ‘for my knight’s sake. If my bow and arrows had been by my side, I would have tried whether during my captivity I had forgotten the lessons in archery that my father taught me. But look,” she added, “that tall warrior, who fought so lion-like in my defence, is wounded, and here you are attending on me, who sat at my ease while he was facing death”

To my shame be it spoken, I had forgotten how profusely the blood had been flowing from M’William’s wound. A Mogul sword had cut him on his left shoulder. We now staunched the blood and bound up the wound. The princess herself supplied fine linen for the purpose, and was eager to give up her own cajawa to the wounded man. She could, she said, ride, and would enjoy the exercise. The burly giant, however, laughed at the proposal. In spite of the blood that had flowed from his wound, he was not badly hurt, and was quite able to ride. All my other followers had received slight wounds or bruises, but, considering the fierceness of the fight, they had come off remarkably well by the favour of fortune.

There was no reason for longer delay, so we now proceeded on our journey, leaving the discomfited Moguls to bury their dead. We had little fear that they would venture again to try conclusions with us.

CHAPTER XIV

CROSSING THE HINDU KUSH

FOR seven or eight days after the repulse of the Moguls in the valley of the Cabul river our struggle was rather with the powers of nature than with human enemies. Aurangzebe had evidently withdrawn his forces from the route we were following. But we had great mountains to climb, and, in the higher regions that we had to traverse, the wind blew cold from the snowy mountain tops. Luckily the season was so far advanced that we had nothing to apprehend from snowstorms. But even at this time of the year the cold was hard to bear after the heat of India.

All through the journey the recommendations of the mullah of Cabul were of inestimable value to us. Wherever we went, we found his friends and disciples, who were willing and able to help us. As if it were yesterday, I remember the reception given to us by one of his brother mullahs at our first halting-place after the fight. The old

man received us at his door with the customary oriental salutation of welcome, "Peace be unto you"; to which we replied, "And unto thee be peace".

Then he led us into a great cave, which was the principal apartment in his residence. For these mountains are honey-combed with caves, which are utilized as dwelling-places for man and beast, and are found to be safer and drier than houses built by human architects. In this great natural hall we were seated on sheepskins and bearskins. Before we were allowed to tell our tale we were given cups of *falodeh*, a white jelly strained from wheat and drunk with sherbet, to cool which snow was brought in from the snow-pits constructed for the storage of this luxury. This light viand was peculiarly delightful and refreshing at a time when we were too exhausted to have an appetite for more substantial fare. It gave us new life and energy, and we were presently able to do full justice to the feast of roast mutton that was placed before us. According to the custom of the East we had to eat with our fingers. Our trenchers consisted of leavened bread. The meat was followed by trays of

sweetmeats and fruit, and at the end of the repast we drank sherbet mixed with snow. The law of the Prophet prevented our host from offering us any of the wine made in the neighbouring country of Kafiristan. Donnelly, however, managed to buy some skins of it from the villagers, and when we tasted it on the following day we found it most agreeable. Before we retired to rest, the weariness was washed out of our feet and limbs with warm water in which bran and sweet herbs were mixed. Similar kindness was shown to the princess by the ladies of the mullah's family in another cave, which constituted the women's portion of the mullah's subterranean dwelling.

Next morning the good old man was up betimes to see us off. He gave us his blessing, which I for my part did not scorn to take from a Mahometan whose virtues might put many a Christian priest to shame. He also gave us *postins*, or sheepskin coats, to protect us against the cold winds of the snowy regions, into which we had now to ascend. It was most difficult to induce the mullah to accept any recompense for all the kindness he had shown us.

"My disciples," he said, "are very good to me, and whatever I want they give me"

"But we, too," argued the princess, "are also thy disciples, and we shall be dishonoured if we make no offering to thy shrine"

So saying she pressed him to accept at least a half of the rubies we had taken from the turban of the Mogul cavalier near Cabul. After much parleying, and with great reluctance, he at last consented to take one ruby, and the princess selected for him the largest of the lot.

While this polite altercation was going on, I noticed a tall man in the dress of a dervish, who seemed to survey the scene with much interest. To judge from his wooden bowl, his staff of peace, the number of bead rosaries round his neck, and the holy Koran suspended therefrom with cords of hair, he appeared to be a very holy man. When the mullah at last accepted the ruby, this dervish made me a low obeisance, and asked if he might be permitted to accompany us, for he too was bound to Balkh. I willingly gave him the permission he desired, and he made his preparations for the journey with great haste, and joined our company.

An hour or two afterwards, as I rode beside the camel of the princess to receive her orders, she asked me who the dervish was

"I saw him," she said, "with his eyes fixed on the rubies when we showed them to the mullah. The greedy gleam of his eyes, as he looked at them, did not seem to agree with his holy garb."

I replied that I knew nothing about him, except that he was a traveller like ourselves, and needed our protection.

"From his accent I should put him down as a Persian," she said, "and except for his Koran, rosary, and staff of peace, he looks more like a sturdy robber than a man of God."

"Surely you wrong the poor man!" I replied. "My lady is not wont to be suspicious without cause. See how friendly he is with your four countrymen, who left the Moguls and joined us."

She would not, however, give up her suspicions.

"He is very likely inciting them to rebellion," she said. "At any rate he has seen me in charge of these priceless rubies, and, if he wants to steal them, he will come in the night to take them from me. How can I ever

enjoy a moment's calm sleep with such a thought in my head? Here, take them and keep them yourself"

So saying, she handed me the bag of rubies, which I tied round my neck with a string. As I did so, the dervish happened to look round.

"I do believe that man has eyes in the back of his head," she said, "and very quick ears. He heard what we were saying, and looked round in time to see me handing the bag to you. So you had better look after them well, and wear them next your heart."

"Whatever my lady gives me," I replied, "she may be sure that I will place next my heart. But it is vain to ask me to fear an unwarlike priest."

"Very well," she said. "Keep your own opinion and I will keep mine. But please return me my bow that I lent to Duncan yesterday, and ask the Balkh troopers if any of them can make me some arrows. I might, as we travel, have an opportunity of showing my skill as an archer."

"Surely my lady would not have the heart to harm a deer or a pigeon?"

"Perhaps not," she replied. "But in good

sooth, if I saw a leopaïd preparing to spring on a deer, or a hawk about to swoop on a pigeon, I would bend my bow on the leopard or the hawk. At any rate I always like to have my bow and arrows by my side."

From the above conversation it will be plain that the princess and I were now on friendly terms. It could not well be otherwise. We were constantly thrown together by our common danger. In all difficulties I asked her advice, and her cleverness and knowledge of the country and the people were invaluable. Nor did I feel overwhelmed by the consciousness of inferiority of birth. If she was a princess of Balkh, the chiefs of our clan claimed descent from twenty-five generations of ancient kings of Scotland, and bore the proud motto "S Rioghail mo Dhream", which means, as I explained to her, "My People are Royal."

The Balkh troopers were delighted to be able to do a service for their princess. At our next halting-place they made her a dozen arrows, which, with her bow, she deposited in her cajawa, so that they might be ready for use if occasion required.

Day by day we proceeded on our journey

northwards, rising higher and higher to colder and yet colder regions. And not only I and my followers, but also the Princess of Balkh, rejoiced to see the snow. The more snow we saw around us, the more we were reminded of our own cold northern home, and the safer the princess felt from the power of Aurangzebe. Deeply did we appreciate the forethought of the old mullah, whose shaggy *postins* prevented us from shivering in the icy breezes.

The dervish conducted himself in the most exemplary manner, saying his prayers regularly at the hours prescribed by the Prophet, and seeing that the Balkh troopers, the mulcteers, and the camel-driver did likewise. He knew the country well, and often rode by my side, and called my attention to all that was worth seeing. On the fourth day after leaving Cabul we crossed the pass of Hajeeguk, thrice as high as the top of Ben Nevis. On the following morning we went through the still more elevated pass of Kaloo, where the frozen snow was strong enough to support us and our horses, although it was not far from midsummer.

CHAPTER XV

THE IDOLS OF BAMEEAN

THENCE we descended towards Bameean through a valley above which beetled tremendous precipices that seemed ready to topple over and fall on our heads. As we passed along, the dervish pointed out the post-houses that had been constructed by an ancient king of Persia, whose dominions had extended thus far to the east. At the end of the valley we reached the town of Bameean, most of the inhabitants of which live in caves hollowed in the sides of the hills.

Here we made our mid-day rest. As soon as we had taken our usual frugal meal of *falo-deh* and mulberry bread, washed down with the wine of Kafirstan, the dervish whispered to me that, if I would accompany him, he would show me the greatest wonder of the country, the great idols of Lat and Munat, which have the honour of being mentioned in the Koran. I started up immediately to go, for in a foreign land one should never be pre-

vented by laziness from seeing all that is to be seen. When the princess heard what I was going to do, she tried to dissuade me.

"Surely," she said, "we have had enough toil climbing up these terrible mountain-passes. Why should we go out of our way to clamber over dangerous rocks and see idols that were constructed by devils to ensnare the souls of men?"

When, however, she could not deter me, with what looked like a woman's inconsistency she declared that she and her attendant lady would come too.

I invited Donelly also to accompany us, as I had noticed him for the past day or two taking every opportunity that presented itself of having a talk with Ayesha, the attendant of the princess.

So the five of us started in company, the princess taking with her the bow and arrows which were her constant companions, although I had never yet seen her shoot a shaft from the string. I was soon, however, to learn that her bow was more than an idle plaything.

After a walk of about a mile over very rocky ground we arrived at the foot of the

hill on which the idols were sculptured. There stood the monstrous figures, one male and one female. The male idol was over a hundred feet in height, about half the height of the hill that contained it. The female idol was about half as high. Both of them had been much mutilated by the Mahometans, who abominate all kinds of idolatry. Cannon had been employed to break their legs, the four hands had been broken off, and the faces were disfigured. From where we stood we could dimly see coloured pictures ornamenting the interior of the niche round the heads of the images.

"You can easily climb up the hill," said the dervish, "and from a projection of the rock see the beauty of these pictures close at hand, if you honour cares to see such devilish workmanship and does not fear the steep ascent."

Much to the annoyance of the princess, my curiosity impelled me to go on.

"If you must go," she said in a whisper to me, "don't leave that evil-eyed dervish with us. Take him away with you, and leave Donelly to protect us."

So the dervish and I started up the hill,

he leading the way. Before we reached the height of the head of the bigger idol, he showed signs of weariness and dropped behind, saying in a grumbling tone

“Your honour’s muscles must be made of iron. How can men of ordinary flesh and blood like myself keep pace with you?”

“My part of Fiangistan,” I replied, “is famous for its great mountains, and from childhood we are accustomed to climb the steepest crags.”

I was vain of the compliment paid me, and pressed on all the more quickly to the coign of vantage from which the coloured pictures were to be seen. They were paintings of the bust of a woman surrounded by a halo. The extraordinary thing about them was the freshness and vividness of the colouring. Owing to the fact that they were sheltered from the weather they were as bright and distinct as if they had been newly painted.

I was roused from my absorption in the pictures before me by a sharp cry of pain and a tinkling noise close behind me. Turning quickly round I saw a long, naked knife lying on the rock and the dervish running away to the summit of the hill with an arrow sticking

in his forearm I started in pursuit, but soon found that after all he was a far better mountaineer than I. It was impossible to overtake him, and I presently gave up the hopeless chase and retraced my steps to the foot of the hill.

The princess met me in a state of great agitation

"As soon as you left us," she cried, "I reproached myself for telling you to take that evil hypocrite with you. I would have called you to come back, but you are so obstinate in going your own way. So I placed an arrow on my bow-string and watched you keenly as you went up the hill together. My fear for you was increased when you let him go behind you. Never again, sir, let an Afghan or a Persian (I am sure he is a Persian) walk behind you unless you have a coat of mail on your back. At last, when you were gazing at the pictures, I saw him unsheathe his long knife and raise his hand to stab you behind. Then my arrow flew. My eye is not so sure as it once was. I aimed at his heart and only struck his arm. But never mind, my aim was straight enough to save your life."

I knelt down and kissed the fair hand that had shot the arrow so truly

She drew it away, exclaiming "Ah! do not kiss my hand. It is a bloody hand. If I had only shot straighter," she added with a shudder, "the arrow would have pierced the traitor's heart, and I should have been a man-slaying virago. Would you or anyone have ever spoken to me, or looked at me again, if I had had a man's death on my soul?"

I replied that any man or woman might justly be proud of having rid the world of such a vile villain as the pretended dervish.

"Nay, but you must think me unwomanly," she said. "The women of India and Frangistan do not shed the blood of their enemies."

To comfort her I told her the story of Black Agnes of Dunbar, and how not a few gentle ladies, as I had often heard sung in ballads, had gone in the disguise of pages to Palestine with the knights whom they loved, and fought by their side in battle, and saved them from the hostile steel at the sacrifice of their own lives.

"Ah, well," she said, "that is worse than anything I could do! I would rather die than go masquerading in man's attire. After

all, it is well even for women to be able to use the bow and arrow, and it seems that I can shoot better than the archers of Tamerlane. For in the pages of the historian, Sherif o Din, I remember reading that none of his archers could hit the head of that high idol. Perhaps even historians do not always tell the truth."

While the princess and I were talking thus, her lady was reproaching Donelly for not bringing his musket with him.

"Next time," she said, "we come to see ruins bring your fire-weapon with you, and don't leave the duty of protecting your master's life to us ladies."

Donelly at first hung his head, but presently turned round with a sly look and said

"To us ladies, indeed! I should not like to trust to you for defence against anything as big or as strong as a black beetle."

This was an unkind reference to an incident that had happened the day before, when Ayesha had been valiantly defended by Donelly against the approach of the insect mentioned. Women are much the same all over the world, and though I know well

that my lady would have boldly faced a lion or a tiger in defence of anyone she loved, I am not sure that she could always calmly endure the approach of a mouse

We presently returned to our encampment, where we found our friends had become rather anxious on account of the length of our absence. I told them of the attempt on my life, and how marvellously it had been frustrated by the princess

CHAPTER XVI

DESCENT TO BALKH

AFTER leaving Bameean we had still two high passes to go through the pass of Akrobat and, last of all, that of Kara Kotal. When we had crossed these we had all the snowy range of the Hindu Kush behind us, and gradually descended to the plain, following the course of the River Khulm. We were now entering a new country, in which the majority of the inhabitants were Usbegs. They wore high peaked fur caps, black postins, wide baggy trousers reaching to the knee, and short black boots. Like the natives of Northern India, they twisted bandages round the calves of their legs to give support to the muscles during long marches.

My princess rejoiced to find herself once more among her own countrymen, and began to give me lessons in the language they spoke. I too felt as if I were returning to my native

land when I saw the hawthorn and the sweet-brier growing on the banks of the River Khulm Their fragrance brought back to mind a full tide of recollection of the Scotch braes on which I had been bred, and even the rank hemlock appeared beautiful in my eyes as a memento of the dales of Dunstaffnage, in which I had last seen its clusters of white flowers.

By the middle of June we reached the city of Balkh without encountering any further adventures worth chronicling As we approached the capital the princess, out of deference to the customs of the East, adopted a more distant manner towards me, and I was debarred from enjoying as much of her society as formerly For although the Usbegs and the people of Central Asia generally allow their women far more liberty than is tolerated in India, they do not permit such freedom of intercourse between the sexes as is customary in Europe But while thus withdrawing herself into seclusion, she graciously assured me again and again that she owed to me not only restoration to her native land, but also life, for she could never have lived long as a captive in India

Then she gave me a priceless ruby ring to replace the one I had bartered at Cabul when I had no other means of purchasing what was necessary to provide for her escape. In response to my earnest prayer she allowed me to cut off a tiny lock of her auburn tresses, which I shall wear next my heart till death, yea, and after death. I gave in return my only jewel, the Cairngorm brooch that fastened my Highland plaid, and that henceforward often shone like a great yellow star on the bosom of my noble princess. I also at the same time restored to her keeping the bag of rubies that had so nearly cost me my life.

“And remember,” she said to me, “whatever may happen, never believe that I have forgotten your loyal service, as I will always firmly believe in your truth and loyalty, even though an angel from heaven should tell me the contrary.”

I faithfully promised never to doubt her goodness. But I had not yet distinctly spoken to her of love—that is, never with my tongue, for my eyes had doubtless spoken of love as plainly as eye can speak. I might never have such an opportunity

again. So I summoned up all my courage, and, with my heart beating tumultuously, said:

“May I never aspire to a nearer and dearer place in my lady’s heart? Is it impossible that, if not now, yet at some future time, my lady may give me her love? Can she not even now give me hope?”

My lady made no reply to my impassioned appeal, but, bending over a posy of wild flowers that I had gathered for her on the way, took out gravely from the bunch a rosebud and handed it to me

Soon after this we entered the city of Balkh

We had reached our destination after a long, toilsome, and perilous journey. But in my mind satisfaction at the accomplishment of a difficult undertaking was almost overwhelmed by feelings of sadness and regret. There would be for me no more delightful communion with my lady under the open sky among the most beautiful and sublime scenes of nature. If we had had difficulties and dangers to overcome, the keen mountain breezes inspired us with strength and courage to encounter them, and even to enjoy the

struggle. It was a joy and a pride to me to watch over my lady's safety night and day, and equally a joy that on two occasions I owed my life to her watchful care. Then there was the glad feeling of confidence in my four comrades, who proved themselves all the way from Cabul to Balkh true as steel, vigilant as dogs, and brave as lions. Difficulties and dangers encountered under such conditions only gave an additional zest to the joy of living.

We entered the city of Balkh, called on account of its antiquity the Mother of Cities, in the middle of June. All the well-watered plain round the walls was yellow with ripe corn, but the countrymen did not know whether they would be allowed to gather in the harvest, for they were always expecting the approach of the invading armies. The walls of the city made a circuit of twenty miles. It was a great city, but not quite so great as might be supposed from the extent of the walls, which included large spaces of ground occupied by gardens. All the buildings were made of sun-dried bricks. They were of great size, but neither the mosques, palaces, nor caravanserais could

rival in beauty those that we had seen two months before in the capital of Shah Jehan.

One of our Mogul troopers had been sent on in advance to announce the coming of the princess. She was met at the gate by a body of cavalry surrounding a litter with curtains of blue silk richly embroidered. In this she was conveyed to the palace, where she was received by her mother, the daughter of the Khan of Samarcand. We also were treated with much respect. Instead of being allowed to take refuge in the public caravanserai, we were guided to a large empty house, which was being rapidly prepared for our reception, and there at last we had rest after our long journey.

After we had partaken of the refreshment liberally provided for us, I received a formal visit from the lord who had control of the household of the queen dowager. He gave me the latest news of the progress of the war as far as it was known in the city of Balkh. Nazir Khan's head-quarters were at Kunduz, about half-way between Balkh and Faizabad, but it was not expected that he would long maintain his position there. The

forces he had been able to rally round his standard were far too weak to give battle to the army of Aurangzebe, which was steadily advancing and crushing all attempts at resistance. A large portion of the Usbeg nation held aloof from the struggle, as they disputed the validity of Nazir Khan's right to the throne, and believed, or affected to believe, that Aurangzebe was supporting the cause of Zohia, their rightful queen. The position of the Usbegs of Balkh was rendered still worse by the fact that their kinsmen in the north, the Usbegs of Samarcand, were collecting their forces with the professed object of assisting the invaders, who had originally been invited to the north by the Khan of Samarcand to protect him against the hostility of the Khan of Balkh. Altogether the fortune of the Usbegs, weakened by internal strife and threatened by a powerful enemy, was at a very low ebb. The return of the princess to Balkh did not seem calculated to restore unity to the national councils. Rather, there was a serious danger that, now that she was restored to them, her supporters would make open war against Nazir Khan. My informant concluded by telling me that a council, which

I was invited to attend, was to be held at the palace on the morrow to deliberate on the best course to be adopted at this great crisis

CHAPTER XVII

THE GREAT COUNCIL OF WAR

ACCORDINGLY, on the following day I repaired at noon to the great durbar-room of the palace, where all the notables of Balkh, who were prevented by age or disinclination from fighting under Nazir Khan's standard, were assembled in council. In the centre stood empty the great white marble throne, on which, according to tradition, Cyrus, or Kai Kaoos, as they called him, had sat twenty-two centuries before. The more impetuous of the adherents of the princess had wished her to assert her claim to the sovereignty by sitting therein, but the older and wiser members of her party thought the proposal premature. So the throne was allowed to remain empty for the present.

The debate commenced in a quiet and orderly manner. Various plans of campaign were proposed and discussed. No one ventured to recommend submission to the Moguls, but there seemed to be a general feeling in

the assembly that the struggle was hopeless. Then a fiery young Usbeg noble got up and declared that there was no hope of success as long as they were commanded by Nazir Khan, a leader whose repeated failures showed clearly that he was hateful to heaven, because he had usurped a throne to which he had no right. Far brighter, he said, had been their hope of victory when they fought under the banner of their true king, the gallant father of Zohra. Let them now rally round the throne of the princess, hurl Nazir Khan from the throne he had usurped, and they would soon drive the Moguls out of the country. His words were received with shouts of applause by many of the nobles present. Then an old mullah started up and called the adherents of the princess no better than unbelievers. How, he asked, could they venture to think of placing the princess on the throne, though the holy Prophet, on whose name be praise, had distinctly declared that "the people that makes a woman its ruler will not find salvation". The tide of angry passion rose higher and higher. Swords were half-drawn from their scabbards, and the opponents would soon have passed from words

of violent abuse to blows, had not a tall khan with a commanding voice called upon the assembly to be silent, for he had a proposal to make which might be worth hearing. The noisy wranglers replaced their swords in their scabbards, and stood silent to hear what he had to say.

“Nobles of Balkh,” he began, “you have spoken much, and, as it seems to me, to little purpose. We have an overpowering enemy almost at our gates, and none of us can devise any plan which offers much hope of successful resistance. When our own counsel has failed, let us see whether we cannot get better counsel from foreigners. We have in our midst five strangers from a distant land. They are Feringhis, and all Feringhis¹ are very cunning. Could any of us have done what these five Feringhis have done? Could we, like them, have taken the princess out of the Bala Hissar, out of a city swarming with Mogul troops, and brought her safely through the Hindu Kush, driving back discomfited the troops that were sent to recapture her? Truly we know by this, if we did not know it before, that the Feringhis are clever as devils, and I

¹ Feringhis = Europeans.

myself believe that they have command over powerful spirits, which work their will. Also, it is well known that they are as avaricious as they are cunning. They will do anything for gold and precious stones. Let us, then, offer them rich jewels and gold if they will exert their cunning and supernatural power to save our nation in the hour of danger. It is better that they should have our wealth than that it should be swept into the coffers of Shah Jehan."

All eyes were now turned upon me as the leader of the band of strangers from whom salvation might be looked for. I asked whether I might be permitted to address the assembly, and, permission being granted, I spoke as follows —

"Nobles of Balkh, we are neither magicians nor greedy of wealth. It was not by magical power but by force of arms and good fortune that we brought the princess from Cabul to Balkh, through a land in possession of hostile troops, and through the snowy passes of the Hindu Kush. Nor did we do this for love of money, but, like good knights, to succour a distressed princess who was wrongfully kept in durance by a powerful and cruel enemy.

Nor am I without hopes that, if you put your trust in us, we may do greater deeds than this, and help you to drive the proud prince Aurangzebe back to India. For know, nobles of Balkh, that we too are natives of a mountainous northern country like yours, and that for many centuries we have been warred upon by a southern kingdom, richer and more populous and more powerful than our little kingdom of Scotland. Again and again have the mighty kings of England crossed our borders and ravaged our land far and wide with fire and sword, even as Aurangzebe has ravaged your land. Again and again have their armies been forced to retire disgraced and discomfited, although we could not do battle with them on equal terms, just as you cannot muster armies large enough to engage in a pitched battle with the great army of Aurangzebe. Thus it seems to me that, if you will make war against the Moguls as we made war against the English, you may hope for success. Also, I tell you, men of Balkh, believe it or not as you like, that I am the instrument ordained by fate to free you from the tyranny of Aurangzebe. In our country as in yours we have men gifted by God with

insight into the future Long ago one of those prophets, who never has been known to err, saw a mysterious vision of my future destiny. In that vision he plainly saw me driving from a cold mountainous country, like but unlike Scotland, a great army that threatened the liberty of the people. He often told me how in his vision there were in the retreating army huge animals with tails before and behind and with towers on their backs, on which sat men with dark faces bound in white turbans All this we believed, but could not then understand But now that I have seen the troops of Aurangzebe and his war elephants, methinks that I better comprehend the vision, and that it is the Mogul army that I am destined, through the help of Providence, to drive southwards like chaff before the wind."

The meeting listened with silent attention to my words, doubtful whether to condemn my presumption or to derive encouragement from my hopeful words When I had concluded, a mullah of great authority rose up and said

"Truly, even in Frangistan there are men of God who are inspired by Him to know the

future Have ye not all heard the prophecy of the holy fakir who has his shrine at Jizak, on the banks of the Oxus.—

‘Let not Shaibani’s offspring fear
To face the Indian Mogul’s spear,
When Balkh herself has fallen low,
A warrior from north-western snow,
White as the snow-drift shall appear,
And break the Mogul’s conquering spear,
And o’er your snowy mountains spread
The corpses of his tombless dead’.

Look on the pale face of the strange warrior
Is it not white as the snow-drift, and are not
we Usbegs the offspring of Shaibani, to whom
the prophecy was addressed long ago, when
that great warrior foiled again and again the
might of Babar, the ancestor of this Aurang-
zebe who now oppresses us Surely there
now stands before us the saviour of our
country, who the fakir foretold would arise
in the hour of our need If you reject the
help he proffers, on your own heads be the
ruin of your country and your race!”

This decided most of the waverers Although Balkh had not yet fallen, the prediction of the fakir of Jizak confirmed the vision of the Highland bard, and almost all the

Usbegs present now believed that I should somehow lead them to victory, and drive the invaders back to Cabul and India. It was therefore determined to give me a high command and to follow my advice in the conduct of the campaign

I now obtained permission to address the meeting a second time "We have," I said, "in our country proverbs that say that union is strength, and that God helps those who help themselves. Aurangzebe and his generals would have laughed with joy had they seen you, as you were a few minutes ago, ready to fly at each other's throats. How can you expect to resist successfully the armies of the Great Mogul if you cannot agree among yourselves? Was it not the disagreement between the Khan of Samarcand and the Khan of Balkh that first encouraged Shah Jehan to send his sons to invade your country? And is not the success of Aurangzebe due to your factions and quarrels as to who should ascend the throne, on which, if these quarrels continue, no Usbeg will ever sit again? Let me tell you a story of my own country. Our army was once drawn out to meet the English foe, but our nobles, as often happened, were

quarrelling among themselves instead of devising in concert the best means to defeat the enemy. Then arose Lord Swinton, an old warrior, who not only showed the others the order of battle by which victory would be won, but also implored them to cease their fatal dissensions at least until the enemy was defeated. Most of them disregarded his advice. But there was a young warrior there whose father Lord Swinton had slain. This young warrior was so moved by his words that he asked the slayer of his father to do him the honour of conferring knighthood upon him in spite of the blood feud that existed between them. If the noble example of these two patriots had been followed, my countrymen would have won the day. But the other nobles persisted in their quarrels. There was neither harmony in their counsels, nor common action on the battle-field. The result was a disastrous defeat. I ask you now, nobles of Balkh, to follow the better course that Lord Swinton in vain urged upon his countrymen. Some of you are for the princess, others for Nazir Khan. Solemnly swear before God on the sacred Koran to forget your factions until Aurangzebe has been driven back to Cabul,

and then settle the succession of the throne according to the laws and customs of your nation. If you will not do this, it is vain to contend against the Moguls, and I must crave leave to return with my followers to my own country, and leave you to slavery and ruin."

My words were greeted with universal approval. The leading members of the two opposing factions agreed to forget their hostility for the present and arranged to meet in the mosque, where they would solemnly swear to devote all their energies to the defeat of the common enemy, until the land was freed from the presence of the Moguls.

It was also resolved to send an embassy to the Khan of Samarcand, who ruled over the Usbegs to the north of the Oxus, beseeching him to send help to his distressed brethren in Balkh instead of aiding the Moguls, and pointing out to him that, if the Usbegs did not offer a united front to the enemy, Shah Jehan would enslave all the Usbegs and be crowned Emperor of Asia on the throne of his ancestor Tamerlane at Samarcand, just as his grandfather Akbar had become master of Cashmir by taking advantage of the dis-

sensions of those who should have united to defend their country

I was then asked to disclose the plan of campaign that I recommended. This, however, I refused to do before such a large assembly, in case it should be overheard by hostile ears and reported to Aurangzebe. It would be more fitting to consider the details of the campaign at a council composed of the leaders who were to hold the chief command.

CHAPTER XVIII

ABDULLAH KHAN

NEXT day Abdullah Khan returned to Balkh with five thousand men and news from the seat of the war. He was, next to Nazir Khan, the most powerful of the Usbeg nobles, and favoured the cause of the princess. He readily accepted, however, the arrangement that had been made to give up internal faction as long as the enemy remained in the country. The news he brought was that Aurangzebe was advancing steadily northwards, and that Nazir Khan had moved eastwards from Kunduz with the main body of the Usbeg army to defend Faizabad and the ruby mines. He had sent Abdullah Khan to Balkh in case the enemy should attack that city.

It was immediately resolved that Abdullah Khan should be invested with the command of all the available Usbeg forces that had not moved eastwards under the banner of Nazir Khan, and that I should be attached to his head-quarters, so that I might be able to give

such suggestions as I might think fit for the successful carrying on of the war.

In the evening Abdullah Khan invited me to a repast at his house. As might have been inferred from the stoutness of his person, he was something of a *bon vivant*, and the feast he provided was sumptuous and well prepared. Pilaos,¹ curries, and stews of various kinds, and kabobs² of chicken and goose were brought in, and, to crown the banquet, a young lamb flavoured with the juice of a bitter orange. Then followed trays of sweetmeats and the fine apricots for which Balkh is famous. The whole was washed down with draughts of sherbet mixed with snow. The feast was all the more agreeable to both of us as we had for a long time previously tasted nothing better than the rough and irregular meals that fall to the lot of the traveller and the campaigner. Abdullah Khan, besides providing this banquet for me at his own house, sent an abundant supply of provisions for the refreshment of my followers. From his good-nature and hospitality I had every reason to congratulate myself on the prospect of hav-

¹ Pilaos = meat cooked with rice, raisins, and spices

² Kabobs = small pieces of meat roasted on skewers

ing him as the general of that portion of the Usbeg army to which I was attached. Also from his conversation during the meal I formed a high opinion of his shrewdness and knowledge of the art of war.

While we were seated at the repast we confined ourselves to general remarks on military questions. After we had eaten and drunk our fill, he took me to a retired corner on the top of the house, where we could discuss the military situation without fear of being overheard. He was very far from taking a favourable view of the position of affairs.

"Now that Aurangzebe," he said, "has got his army through the Hindu Kush he has the game in his own hands. Although an Usbeg, man for man, is stronger and braver than a Mogul from India, one Usbeg cannot be supposed to be a match for four Moguls, and the odds in numbers against us are at least four to one. We have no hope of defeating them in a pitched battle, and, if we take refuge in our walled cities, Aurangzebe has powerful artillery with which to batter down our walls. So it seems that we must bend to the tempest for the present, and take

at some future time a more favourable opportunity of rebelling, when Aurangzebe has withdrawn to India with the bulk of his great army. Such appears to me to be the situation of affairs, but, if you have any counsel to offer by which we may war against the invaders with any hope of success, disclose it to me now, and be assured that Abdullah Khan will gladly follow it, without even asking whether it proceed from heaven above or from the suggestion of the devil."

From his concluding words it was evident that the old warrior, like so many of his countrymen, regarded all Europeans as powerful magicians.

"With much that you have said," I replied, "I entirely agree. You cannot expect to muster a large enough army to fight a pitched battle against Aurangzebe with any hope of success. Yet, if you will listen to me, you may, without the help of the devil, drive him back to the land whence he came. My counsel, in a few words, is this. Since you cannot fight a pitched battle with his main army in the plain, attack the enemy not in the plain but in the mountains, not by day but by night, and do not fight his main body

in the front, but attack the flank of his long line of communications, by which his provisions and reinforcements come from Cabul. The Usbegs, confining themselves to night attacks on the mountains, will gain every advantage from their knowledge of the country and from their agility as mountaineers, and, if we can cut off the supplies of our enemies, their numbers, instead of making them strong, will be a source of weakness. The fact that this plan of warfare has not been followed by you heretofore will make it all the more efficacious when it is once begun. No attack having been made on the enemy in the mountains since they emerged into the northern plains, no danger is apprehended except in the front, where Aurangzebe commands with his chief generals around him. This false feeling of security will weaken the whole line of communications, so that a bold attack is almost certain to be successful."

Abdullah Khan saw at once the force of what I urged. As far as Mahometan gravity would permit, he expressed in his countenance the joy he felt at the prospect of victory that my plan afforded.

A few days after the banquet alarming

news came to Balkh. Aurangzebe, having driven back Nazir Khan's forces, was announced to be marching rapidly upon the capital. It did not suit our plan of campaign to have ourselves shut up within the walls of the city, so, with Abdullah Khan and all the men fit to bear arms then in the city, we retired westward to Akcha. The princess also accompanied us in our flight, but she remained in strict seclusion with her mother, and I had no opportunity of seeing her. Thus Balkh was left undefended, and Aurangzebe planted the Mogul standard, a lion couchant shading part of the body of the sun, in triumph on the citadel. His advance, however, favoured our projects, as it rendered the Mogul line of communication longer and therefore more difficult to defend. Also, the fall of Balkh greatly encouraged the spirits of the Usbeks, as the prophecy of the fakir of Jizak intimated that Balkh would be captured before the white-faced stranger would overthrow the Moguls. The partial fulfilment of the prophecy made them confident in its entire truth.

The fall of Balkh decided the wavering mind of the Khan of Samarcand to listen to

given of our intentions, the various points of attack were not to be reached until the night on which the Moguls were to be surprised. Therefore, as my point of attack was the one farthest to the south, I had to advance with my force as speedily as possible, while the leaders of the other four divisions advanced more slowly at rates of speed proportionate to the distances they had to traverse. Abdullah Khan followed last of all in command of the reserve.

CHAPTER XIX

THE RAVINE OF MATHAR

THE pass of Mathar, at which it was arranged that my division should attack the enemy, was about eight days' journey from Balkh by forced marches. My troopers carried with them provisions that would not much impede the rapidity of their movements. Indeed their mulberry bread and fat sheep-tails preserved in snow were as light as the oatmeal and girdles carried by my ancestors, when, under Douglas and Randolph, they harried the northern counties of England, and gave young Edward III his first sharp lesson in the art of war. For the first five days we followed the route which we had already traversed on our way to Balkh and which we knew to be free from the enemy. At Tangimidchi we turned off sharp to the east and followed an affluent of the Kunduz until we reached the main stream of that river, which we forded about twenty miles above the town of Khinjan. We were now close to the line

of Aurangzebe's march, and to the point at which we intended to attack it. On our right towered the mountains of the Hindu Kush, over which Aurangzebe's army had come by the Bajkak Pass, the road over which rises to more than thrice the height of the highest mountains in Scotland. Slowly, by a tortuous and difficult path we wound round the skirts of the mountain till, in a sheltered valley, we reached a shrine the fakir of which was an enthusiastic supporter of the cause of Usbeg liberty. In the building round the shrine we left our horses, and some ten of the troopers to take charge of them, who seemed to have suffered more than the rest of us from the fatigue of our swift and toilsome journey. This shrine was to be the meeting-place for as many of us as returned safe from our perilous enterprise.

We were now within a mile or two of Aurangzebe's line of march, and had to proceed with extreme caution. On foot, led by our guide, we started at mid-day and climbed up the mountain in the direction of the Bajkak Pass. Just as the sun sank in glory behind the snowy summits behind us we halted again, for we were now close to the

gorge in which we had determined a week ago that we should, on this very night of July 10, attack Aurangzebe's army. It was, however, first necessary that, ourselves unseen, we should see what the enemy were doing.

Accordingly I advanced with M'William, and one of the Usbegs to guide us, straight to the cliff overlooking the gorge, while another Usbeg, with Donnelly, went higher up the road to a position that commanded a view of the road leading down from the Bajkak Pass. M'William, the Usbeg, and myself moved slowly and cautiously in the rapidly fading light. It was almost dark when we reached the top of the cliff and, craning our necks over the edge, looked down. The pass beneath us was silent as the grave. No sound of the movement of a living thing could be heard below, nor was there any light of torch or bivouac fire. It was all a terrible scene of sublime desolation enhanced by the almost total darkness. Far below we could hear the murmur of the stream, whose torrent power had been engaged for centuries in hollowing the chasm. On the other side the cliffs were so near us that we could see their dark outlines clearly. The rocks were seamed with

many a crack, and near our feet there was a great bald scar on the edge of the cliff, which showed that recently a great fragment had broken off and fallen into the chasm below. Other similar masses seemed ready to detach themselves and follow its example, so that we took heed to our steps, lest our weight should turn the balance of some unstable piece of rock, and we should be precipitated with it to sudden destruction.

The ravine was an ideal place for such an attack as we meditated. All that was wanting was the presence of the enemy straggling through it, and for this, as it happened, we had not long to wait, for we were presently joined by Donelly and his companion, who announced that they had seen the torches of a large body of men approaching. They could not tell how far off they were, but they thought that they were very near and would soon enter the ravine. Our only fear now was that they might pitch their camp for the night outside. So we waited, listening to the noise of their approach coming nearer and nearer. At last, to our great satisfaction, we saw the light of the first torches entering the ravine, and presently the whole body of armed

men and animals followed. A halt was called, tents were pitched, and every preparation was made for passing the night in the ravine, the high rocky walls of which afforded shelter against the cold east wind.

The enemy were now in the trap we had set for them. It remained for us to use our advantage to the full. The first point to be considered was whether we should attack them in the darkness of night or wait for the morning light. This was by no means an easy question to decide. The terror inspired by a night attack would be greater. Also the enemy were now entirely off their guard and had evidently no apprehension of danger. If we waited till the morning, they might, by treachery or accident, become aware of our presence. But on the other hand the weapon on which we chiefly relied was the bow and arrow, which could not be aimed properly in the dark. After carefully weighing the considerations on either side I determined to wait till the morning. To diminish the likelihood of our presence being discovered, I left our main body to sleep through the night where it was, at a distance of about two miles from the ravine. I myself, my foster-brothers,

M'William, Donelly, and three of our most trusty Usbeg followers slept and kept watch by turns in a cleft of the rock from which we could observe the movements of the enemy. Fortunately for us they suspected nothing and rested peacefully, unconscious of the fact that to many of them this was the last night they had to live through.

Two hours before dawn we roused our followers and prepared them for action. As from the beginning of our march southwards an attack upon this very ravine had been contemplated, I had at every halt instructed the troopers in the part that they were to take in the operations. For greater ease in the disposition of our forces, three divisions of our whole force, each consisting of one hundred men, had been distinguished from the rest as the red, white, and blue companies, and, to mark the distinction, they were directed to tie round the hilts of their swords tassels of their respective colours. It was further arranged that the red company, which consisted of the most adventurous men, should cross to the other side of the ravine, that the white and blue companies should close the two entrances into it, the white company on the south,

the blue company on the north, and that the main body, consisting of the rest of our force, should occupy the cliffs on the west or near side of the ravine. Such were the general arrangements we had proposed, but of course they were not fixed as the laws of the Medes and Persians, but were liable to alteration to suit the special circumstances that might arise.

There seemed no reason for altering the prearranged disposition, which was therefore adhered to in the main. As, however, everything depended upon the effect produced by the first volley of missiles, and as the cliffs on either side afforded far the best vantage ground from which this volley could be delivered, the blue and white divisions were ordered to take their positions at first on the western cliffs. If they had descended to either the north or the south end of the ravine, they would not have been able to approach near enough to deliver an effective volley without encountering the sentries of the enemy. The report of Donnelly's gun was to be the signal for the commencement of the fray. M'William appeared on the scene with a huge pole, which he intended to use as a crowbar, so that he might work upon the loose

fragments of rock and precipitate them into the gulf below. I wished myself to take the post of danger as leader of the red company, which was to go to the opposite side of the ravine. As my destiny had not yet been fulfilled, I could face any peril of death without fear of the result. In deference, however, to the wishes of my followers, I consented to remain with the larger part of our forces on the west side, and sent my two foster-brothers, whom I never liked to separate from each other, to take the lead on the other side.

All these arrangements having been made clear, the red division was sent by a circuitous route round the south of the ravine, with orders to rejoin on the main body if they happened to be discovered by the enemy. After they had been gone for an hour, and no ill tidings had come to us, we concluded that they had succeeded in crossing the bed of the river and taking up their position on the opposite cliffs. So we also advanced to our allotted positions, with the white company on our right and the blue company on the left. Thus arranged in order of battle we waited eagerly for the first light of dawn, which could not now be far off.

At last it came, pale and gray It was the hour at which human nature sinks to its lowest ebb of vitality, at which the sick are most prone to die, and the boldest spirits are most depressed I had no reason, however, to expect any want of courage in the bold patriots by whom I was surrounded

CHAPTER XX

ATTACK IN THE RAVINE

AS soon as I could distinguish the colours on my tartan plaid, and could see clearly the forms of the Moguls in the pass below us, I gave the order to Donelly to wake the echoes with his fatal musket and begin the work of carnage. All the Usbegs, on both sides of the ravine, had long been ready with their arrows on the bowstring waiting for the signal. The flash of the gun was followed by the simultaneous discharge of five hundred well-aimed arrows. Immediately a horrible hubbub of imprecations and cries of pain succeeded to the silence that had reigned in the ravine a moment before. The camp-followers rushed wildly to and fro, while the soldiers instinctively arrayed themselves in troops to meet the unseen enemy.

Meantime M'William was plying his wooden crowbar with might and main to detach a huge mass of rock from the edge of the cliff

In spite of his tremendous efforts it would not move. So, giving up the attempt, he raised a heavy piece of rock that lay near, and lifting it in his two arms to throw it down on the foe, ran to the edge of the cliff over the half-detached mass he had been vainly trying to disengage. What his great strength had failed to do was effected by his weight and the weight of the piece of rock that he carried. To my horror I saw the great mass yield under his feet, separate from the cliff with an ominous crack, and roll into the ravine below. As it fell, it struck the cliff and loosened other still larger masses, which all rolled down together, dealing widespread devastation. M'William was hurled to destruction with the falling rocks, and thus perished like Samson in the temple of Dagon, destroying by the same act himself and a countless number of enemies.

All the while the archers were pouring in their volleys of arrows with fatal effect on the enemy, who were incapable of retaliating. It was a fearful massacre, pitiable to look upon. But when men fight under the standard of a cruel tyrant to enslave their neighbours, they cannot look for much mercy. They

must expect to suffer what they would inflict on the people of the country which they have wantonly invaded. It was better that these Moguls should die the death of soldiers than that they should kill the men and enslave the women and children of the free Usbeks. Still it is a terrible thing to sit, looking on in cold blood at the destruction of men who have no chance of killing you in return. It made me feel sick and faint, and I uttered a prayer that I might never see such a sight again.

For some short time the enemy remained passive, helplessly exposed to the deadly shower of arrows. Presently we made out a man who seemed to be the leader. He was mounted on a white horse, and pointed with his sword to the northern entrance of the ravine as if urging a movement in that direction. At first the mass of his followers were too much overcome by alarm to comprehend his orders. Presently, however, his words and gestures were understood, and then the whole crowd of men, horses, and mules, instead of making an orderly retreat, rushed like a great torrent along the narrow gorge, in their haste trampling upon each other and pushing each other into the icy cold stream. We could see the

leader on the white horse vainly trying to reduce the disorderly mass to order and discipline. He seemed to bear a charmed life. Many an arrow was aimed at him, and Donnelly sent a bullet after him from his musket, but neither horse nor man was hit. It was not long before the ravine was cleared out, and no one remained in it but the dying and the dead.

It would have been impossible for our small force, even if we had wished to do so, to keep the enemy from emerging from the death-trap in which they had been caught. I therefore now recalled the red company from the eastern cliffs, and sent the white and blue companies to observe and, as far as possible, harass the routed enemy with the few arrows they still had in their quivers. I myself, with the main body, met the red company on their return, and with them entered the scene of death.

My first care was to find the dead body of M^r William. We buried him hastily in a cleft of the rock, over which we rolled great stones to protect his body from bird and beast. In the centre of the ravine, beside the dead body of a mule that had carried it, we found a broken box contain-

ing large quantities of gold mohurs and silver rupees bearing the imperial stamp. These were afterwards divided among our men as spoils of war. I should have liked to do something to relieve the sufferings of the wounded, as an atonement for the merciless slaughter we had inflicted upon them. But our own position was too perilous to admit of delay. Any moment an overwhelming body of the enemy might descend upon us from the Bajkak Pass and catch us in the trap in which we had ensnared our enemies.

Indeed, we had scarcely buried M'William and collected the coins when the look-out men I had posted in the rear came hurrying to us with the news that a still larger force than the one we had almost destroyed was even now coming down from the pass. If the leader on the white horse could succeed in rallying his followers, we were in danger of being caught between two fires, and that at a time when the quivers of most of my men were empty.

The best course for us, therefore, seemed to be to press northwards down the channel of the stream, and in concert with the white and blue companies prevent the defeated

enemy from having any respite in which to recover from their alarm and rally round the standard of their leader.

Accordingly we moved in that direction and charged the enemy, who were attempting to get into order again in the more open ground to the north of the ravine. As our charge was supported by an attack made at the same time by the white and blue companies on their left flank, the enemy were driven forward about a furlong with considerable loss. Here, for the first time, we lost a few of our men.

It was now necessary to secure our retreat. This was not a very easy matter, as we were all on foot and most of our enemies were mounted. Fortunately the ground was so rough that it was unfavourable for cavalry operations, and, as soon as we succeeded in getting a little way up the skirts of the mountains, no horse would be able to follow us.

We retreated according to a system we had practised beforehand with a view to such a contingency. First the red, white, and blue companies retired rapidly up the hill for a hundred yards and took up a favourable

position for defence. While they were doing this, I remained behind with the main body to cover their retreat. When they were established in a strong position, the main body in its turn was to retire quickly and in like manner take up another position, about a hundred yards behind the position held by the red, white, and blue companies. In this way, by alternately retiring and standing on the defensive, we should obviate the danger of being attacked in the rear

While we were waiting for the three companies to establish themselves in their position, Donelly bent down on his knee and shot down the foremost of the advancing enemy. The Mogul commander on the white horse, seeing what had happened, charged rapidly at him with the boldest of his mounted followers. Donelly reloaded quickly and fired again. The Mogul was by this shot slightly wounded in the shoulder, but, rather infuriated than deterred by the pain, spurred his horse more violently to the attack, and was upon Donelly before he had time to load again. Donelly for some time defended himself against a succession of sword-cuts, which he received on the stock

of his gun, but at last his furious enemy succeeded in wounding him on the knee and bringing him to the ground.

Then ensued a fierce conflict over the fallen body of Donelly, whom the enemy were determined to carry off as a captive. The Moguls fought bravely and almost succeeded in attaining their object. While some crossed swords with us, two of them seized the unfortunate Donelly by the shoulders and actually pulled him several feet down the hill. Our men, enraged at the sight (for Donelly was a favourite with them all), made a furious charge, drove back their assailants, and killed the two men who had laid hands on him. Then Duncan and Colin bent down, and, interlacing hands and wrists, made for him the kind of seat that children at their play call a sedan chair. On this they lifted him, and so, with his arms round their necks, he was carried safely and securely up the side of the hill. When sufficient time had been allowed for him to be carried to a safe distance, I gave the signal for retreat, as a band of troopers from the newly-arrived division of the Mogul army was coming up to reinforce our assailants. So all our main body

suddenly turned and ran as fast as they could up the hill. The enemy pursued with shouts of exultation, which were suddenly checked when they found themselves faced by the red, white, and blue divisions, arrayed in a strong position to oppose their further progress. They were met by a volley of arrows which laid many of them low. By these tactics we were able to get out of reach of our pursuers with little loss, and finally arriving at the appointed rendezvous, mounted our horses and took refuge in the mountains, following bridle-paths known only to the natives of the country.

CHAPTER XXI

ATTEMPT TO CAPTURE AURANGZEBE

ALTHOUGH Donelly's wound was not very severe, it was necessary to send him back to Balkh in a litter, to rest and have it properly attended to. After his departure we made other attacks upon Aurangzebe's line of communications, but did not again secure such a success as was obtained in the attack that I have just described. The reason was that, similar attempts having been made with more or less success upon four other points in the line of communications, the enemy were on the alert, and it was less possible to catch them unawares. They had suffered heavy losses, and the moral effect had been still greater than the material injury inflicted. The Moguls all along the line of communications were in a state of alarm, always apprehending surprises and ambushes. To add to their terror we fired burning arrows steeped in naphtha into their encampments so as to set fire to their tents. This practice prevented them

from being able to enjoy quiet rest at night, and it was soon apparent that this disturbance of their sleep did even more to impair the courage and resolution of the Mogul soldiers than the many skirmishes in which they were worsted.

Aurangzebe was quick to recognize the gravity of the situation. He felt compelled to weaken the advance-guard of his invading army by sending back large bodies of troops to occupy more strongly the line of communications. This encouraged Nazim Khan once more to offer battle to a considerable body of the Mogul troops near Kunduz. Of course he was defeated, for he deserved the name of tineman as well as the Douglas who was defeated at Halidon Hill. But on this occasion he did not retire from the battle-field without inflicting on the enemy heavier losses than his own forces had suffered. Thus the Moguls lost heart still more, and began to be doubtful whether they could even maintain their superiority in the open field against the Usbeks.

For the next two or three months there were continual skirmishes along the line of communications, in which the Usbeks, by their knowledge of the country, and their superior

powers of climbing, had almost always the advantage. These encounters were, however, of too indecisive a character to satisfy me. I was full of restlessness and anxiety on account of my love for Zohra and the seeming impossibility of my winning her as a bride, although I could not help flattering myself that I had won a place in her heart. My soul burned with ardour to do some still more important service to the Usbeg cause, partly because a great exploit in war might improve my prospects as a lover, and partly because my state of mind was such that I had an insatiable craving for danger and excitement.

In oriental armies everything depends on the leaders. Again and again it has happened in the East that an army on the point of winning a great victory has been thrown into dismay and suddenly given up the struggle in despair owing to the fall of its commander. This is especially apt to be the case when the leader is not only an able general but also a great prince or king. On these grounds it was plain to me that the capture or death of Aurangzebe would be a great step towards the successful conclusion of the war. If they no longer had Aurangzebe to

lead them, his troops would scatter like sheep who have no shepherd. When I heard, therefore, that he was going to visit the principal posts on the line of communications, I determined to look out for a favourable opportunity to deprive him of his life or liberty.

The chance came in the middle of August. We were watching from our station on the hills a strong Mogul post encamped in the valley beneath, when we saw a small but seemingly well-equipped body of troops approaching from the north. It consisted of about two thousand mounted men surrounding a great elephant, the howdah of which reflected the sunlight from plates of brightly-polished metal. We could not, from our distant point of observation, make out who was seated on the howdah, but knew well that it must be a noble of the very highest rank, for only such ride to war on elephants. Presently the new force joined the post beneath us, where they were received with acclamations and jubilant strains of martial music. As soon as it was dark I sent a spy to find out who the newly-arrived noble might be, and from him learned that it was no less a person than the great Prince Aurangzebe.



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"WE SAW A WELL-EQUIPPED BODY OF TROOPS APPROACHING
FROM THE NORTH"

Here then was the opportunity for which I had long thirsted. Aurangzebe was before me, and I was determined at all risks to try to secure his person, or, if need be, kill him. There was no time to be lost. He was evidently making a tour of inspection along the line of communications, and would probably proceed to the next post on the morrow. It was therefore advisable to act this very night, especially as I was informed that he had made a long march and that his soldiers were very weary.

The Mogul force was encamped on the open plain undefended by any rampart. The tent of Aurangzebe was pitched in the middle of the camp, and was easily distinguished from the others by its greater size and magnificence. My plan was to make a dash at it with fifty chosen men while my other followers distracted the attention of the Moguls from the real point of danger by feigned attacks upon other parts of the encampment. In the confusion that was sure to ensue, it might be possible to get to Aurangzebe's tents. I remembered having read in the chronicles of Froissart how the good Lord James of Douglas, with two hundred men, broke into the camp of

King Edward III near the Abbey of Blanckland, and cut his way to the king's tent through the great English army there assembled. Like that great Scottish warrior I determined to make my attempt at midnight, when most of the Moguls would be fast asleep.

Myself, my two foster-brothers, and the fifty chosen men that were to accompany us prepared for the enterprise by dressing and arming in such a way that we might easily be mistaken for Mogul troopers by the dim light of the half-moon that would be shining in the sky. Thus accoutred we burst suddenly into the Mogul camp at midnight, and made straight for the prince's tent in the centre. Immediately all was confusion. We were a compact, well-armed band of men in the midst of a great crowd of soldiers and camp-followers rushing to and fro, half-armed and half-dressed. The alarm was increased by the conflagration of burning tents at various points on the outskirts of the camp. For my men outside were provided as usual with arrows steeped in naphtha, by means of which they easily set fire to the dry cloth of the tents. At the same time

they made a hideous din with their kettle-drums and shouted at the tops of their voices so vigorously that to the alarmed Moguls it appeared that they were surrounded by a large army. These measures distracted the attention of our enemies from us, so that as we abstained from hostile acts, we were supposed to be Moguls. To encourage this impression I shouted out directions to those around me, telling them that the camp was attacked on the north and east sides, and that they should hurry as fast as they could to the threatened points. In this manner we were able to get close to the prince's tent without encountering any opposition.

The sight that presented itself to us there was so impressive that for a moment we instinctively stood motionless. Just in front of the entrance of the tent was a man who judging from his air of command, could be no other than Aurangzebe himself. His face was of a light olive colour, his eyes were bright, and his nose was very prominent. He was quite unarmed, and robed in a white dress. The only decoration on his person was the great emerald he wore on the front of his turban. He held in his left hand an ebony

walking-stick and in his right hand a Koran. As he was a very pious Mahometan, he had probably been reading by his midnight lamp the book of his Prophet, when he was disturbed by the uproar in the camp. Around him stood, with their horses by their sides, his great nobles in rich robes and costly armour receiving his orders, which he was giving with admirable calmness. When he saw my band approach, he at first mistook us for Moguls and reproached us, saying, "What, sirs! Why come ye here when the enemy are attacking our camp on all sides? If you value your lives, go to—Ha!" he exclaimed, suddenly seeing our hostile intentions, as I rode my horse straight at him, "we are betrayed!"

On hearing these words his nobles and captains vaulted on to their steeds and flung themselves gallantly between us and him. It was one of the proudest moments in my life when, with Duncan and Colin, I crossed swords with Hindu princes and Mahometan nobles, the very flower of Indian chivalry. For before us stood that great Persian warrior and administrator, Ali Merdan Khan, the Rajput Raja Jagat Singh of Kotah, and his brother Jai Singh, distinguished, by the

bright colours of the turbans rolled round their helmets, from the four or five Mogul nobles who stood shoulder to shoulder with them. They were, however, too few to offer a prolonged resistance. We broke through them and made our way into the prince's tent, which we found empty. On the floor was Aurangzebe's turban, which he had hastily exchanged for a helmet in his flight. Colin jumped down from his horse and took from it the great emerald, which remains in my possession to the present day.

It was a great indignity for the proud prince that he should thus be driven out of his tent in the middle of the night. He did not, however, lose his courage and presence of mind, but made for his elephant, which had been brought forward by its keepers in case he should require it, and quickly mounted on the howdah. On this lofty position he was secure against our attack. His followers rallied round the elephant in large numbers, and it was evident that our original intention of capturing him must be given up. So I gave the word to retreat, and we cut our way back through the disordered ranks of the Moguls, many of whom fell beneath our

swords. We then recalled by beat of kettle-drum our comrades who were at different points round the Mogul camp and retired to the mountains. The main object of our attack had failed, and we had gained nothing substantial by it except the green emerald and other casual plunder seized by my followers. We had, however, succeeded in striking terror into the hearts of the Moguls. The story was spread all along the line of communications, and no doubt exaggerated as it went, and the hearts of the Moguls sank within them when they heard how their mighty prince's camp had been plundered in the night, and he himself had only escaped capture by an ignominious flight. For me it was a memorable day, as it was then that for the first time I saw, face to face, the man who afterwards made himself famous throughout the world as one of the greatest of the Great Moguls.

In this manner, with continual skirmishes in the mountains along the line of communications, the war went on until the tints of autumn showed themselves on the trees and the first snow began to fall. Since the Usbegs had begun to follow this new plan

of warfare, Aurangzebe had made but little progress in the work of conquering the country. Although he held Balkh and Kunduz, and had captured one or two other towns, he only really held effectual possession of the territory on which his army encamped and of the forts garrisoned by his troops. Small parties of Moguls could not venture to traverse the country, exposed as they were to the attacks of a hostile population full of martial ardour and confidence in their leaders. Faizabad still blocked the way to the coveted ruby mines. Unless Aurangzebe could gain a great victory, there seemed now every prospect that his campaign would end in a disastrous retreat, a retreat that would be the more disastrous the longer it was delayed. If heavy snow fell and rendered the passes impassable his whole army might be captured. He therefore made every effort to tempt Nazir Khan and Abdullah Khan to engage in a great pitched battle, but to these temptations the Usbeg leaders refused to succumb.

All the time, in every mosque throughout the country, the mullahs were praying for an early and severe winter and heavy snow. Nor did the Usbegs trust only to divine aid. They

have a mysterious magic-stone, called the gedi-stone, by incantations over which the soicerers are supposed to be able to produce bad weather. All who had such stones now produced them, and performed what magic rites were required to affect the weather. Whether it was the prayers to Allah or the magic gedi-stone that produced the desired result, the weather began rapidly to become colder and colder.

CHAPTER XXII

AURANGZEBE'S RETREAT

WHEN the winter set in, Aurangzebe, having failed to bring the decision of the war to the arbitrament of a pitched battle, was at last compelled to give the order for the retreat of his grand army. When this resolution became known by the withdrawal of the Mogul garrisons from Balkh, Kunduz, and the other captured towns, the exultation of the Usbeks knew no bounds. Chiefs and tribes who had formerly stood selfishly aloof, and taken no part in the war, now joined the ranks of the national army. The bolder spirits were eager to array all the forces of the nation between Aurangzebe and Cabul, so as to cut off his retreat to the south. The older and wiser leaders, on the contrary, urged that nothing should be done to prevent him from retiring. He had still a powerful and well-equipped army, which they had never been able to oppose successfully in the open field. If he were given a chance of fighting a pitched

battle, he might win a great victory, overpower the Usbeg forces, and once more be in a position to capture Balkh or Faizabad, which would afford winter quarters for his victorious army

The two opposing parties appealed alike to me for support. My reply was the suggestion of a compromise between the conflicting views. I agreed with the older and more experienced leaders that, if we tried absolutely to prevent Aurangzebe from leaving the country, we might have bitter reason to repent of our temerity. At the same time it would be well to give him as sharp a lesson as possible, so that in future neither he nor any other emperor of India might dream of winning glory by enslaving the hardy mountaineers of the north. I therefore recommended that we should make no serious attack upon the retreating army until it had commenced the ascent of the mountains of the Hindu Kush, and that even then we should assail the Moguls on the rear and on the flanks rather than inspire them with the valour of despair by occupying the passes on the south between them and Cabul. When attacked in this way, they would know that their retreat was left open, and would fight

with the possibility of flight always inviting them to seek their safety by running away

As Aurangzebe retreated, Nazir Khan hung upon his rear, and my troop and the other forces under Abdullah Khan continually assailed his right flank. We did not, however, always have it our own way. When Nazir Khan ventured too near the retreating army, Aurangzebe would every now and then turn fiercely upon him and drive back his vanguard. On one of these occasions Nazir Khan kept up his reputation as a "tineman" by losing over a thousand of his troops. We, too, on the flank of the Mogul army were exposed to many counter-attacks. But we did not suffer much loss from them, as, when hard pressed, we could generally escape without much difficulty by our knowledge of the mountain paths and by reliance on the sure feet of the mountain ponies we rode

At the place in which it was determined to offer battle to Aurangzebe's main army his route passed by a rather narrow path between a lake on the left and a steep mountain on the right, which was to be occupied in force by Abdullah Khan's division of the Usbeg

army Nazir Khan, as usual, was to operate upon the Moguls' rear.

The battle began at daybreak on a bitterly cold day towards the end of November. The Moguls, rising half-benumbed from their pallets round the bivouac fires, were informed of the proximity of their enemies by great stones that came bounding into their midst from the mountain on the right of their line of advance. Hastily they arrayed themselves in order of battle, while many of the non-combatants, with the beasts of burden, fled in disorder towards the south, trusting to the regular army behind them to save them from attack. Their trust, however, was ill-founded. Abdullah Khan had posted a large body of Usbegs to attack the enemy if they began to retreat southwards. These found an easy prey in the loaded mules, many of which, with their precious burdens of provisions and tent equipage, they carried off to the mountains.

In the meantime the main body of the Moguls was drawn out in imposing array, with more than a hundred elephants standing like great towers on their front, or rather on their two fronts, for they had to face Abdullah Khan on the west, and Nazir Khan, who

threatened their rear from the north. For some time there was a dreadful pause before the storm of battle burst. The Moguls were not disposed to attack us in our strong position, and the Usbegs on their side were dismayed by the superior numbers and serried ranks of the Mogul army, and above all by the huge elephants.

For myself, I was not quite so much appalled by the huge beasts as my companions-in-arms were. When studying Latin as a boy under the guidance of my tutor, Mr. Williams, I had read a good deal about the battles that the Romans fought against the Carthaginians and Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, and I had taken more intelligent interest in the warlike tactics employed than in the beauties of the language and literature that my good tutor tried to impress upon me. One fact had especially struck me with regard to the record of the battles in which elephants were employed, namely, that those great beasts, when once they were infuriated, were as likely to do harm to their friends as to their foes.

But there they stood before us as tranquil and unmoved as stoic philosophers. The question was how they could be enraged.

Their fronts were so well protected by armour that it was not easy to wound them with arrows in spite of the large targets they presented to the aim. Suddenly I remembered the lighted arrows, dipped in naphtha, that we had so often used in our night attacks to fire the tents of the enemy. The howdahs on the elephants' backs were made of wood, and could easily be set on fire. I did not delay long in carrying my idea into execution. A volley of burning arrows was soon discharged from all our line at the howdahs of the elephants, many of which caught fire, and could not be extinguished. Other arrows managed to find their way through chinks in their defensive armour to the elephants' eyes, breasts, and legs. Immediately most of the great beasts broke free from all control, and, trumpeting loudly, rushed furiously up and down the field of battle. As I had anticipated, they did far less harm to us than to the Moguls. We could get out of their way by retiring to the rougher ground behind us. The Moguls, crowded in thick array in a narrow space, could not easily escape being trodden under the elephants' feet. Their well-ordered ranks were soon reduced to a pitiable

state of confusion, and we were then able to attack them with the confidence of victors and to inflict upon them heavy loss.

There was, however, one elephant which did not join in the general stampede. This was the elephant that had the proud distinction of bearing Prince Aurangzebe in its silver-plated howdah. Whether because it was better trained than the others, or because the silver plating, with which the wood of the howdah was completely covered, prevented the burning arrows from sticking, it stood its ground motionless as a statue, and when the other elephants eventually broke away from the battle-field up the path to the south, it became a rallying-point for the disordered Moguls. All the time the prince remained imperturbably calm amid the confusion, now giving his orders in a clear ringing voice, and now shooting an arrow with his own hand. The sight of the calmness of their leader restored courage to the Moguls, who rearranged themselves in companies, the strongest being that round the prince's elephant. As a consequence of this our attacks were successfully repulsed, and many of the Usbegs who had ventured too far into the hostile ranks were cut off.

Such was very nearly my fate I was riding, as usual, Shaitan, the great black horse which I had won in the fight by the river He had proved a splendid charger, but he was a true war-horse and shared with human warriors the joy and the excitement of battle On this occasion, in a charge upon the Mogul ranks, he bore me far in advance of my followers The foremost line of the Moguls made way for him rather than stand the shock of a charge that was far heavier than their own horses Thus I found myself deeply embedded in a mass of Mogul troopers, among whom I was dangerously conspicuous by the size and colour of my horse, and by the fact that I was taller and in every way bigger than they In the confusion I had to defend myself against four or five assailants at once. The unequal combat would soon have been over if black Shaitan had not joined in the fray, biting the men and horses in front of him and kicking out behind with all the strength of his mighty legs Then suddenly he turned round and by his weight and strength broke out of the crowd back to my followers, who were still vainly trying to cut their way in to release me from my perilous position

Among the troops of the Mogul army there was one body of horsemen distinguished from the rest of the army by different armour, dress, features, and standards. They were, in fact, not Mahometans, but Hindu Rajputs who had joined in the invasion as tributaries of the Great Mogul. The Rajput rajas and their followers had always been famous for their courage and their loyal devotion to the imperial throne. Those who were present on this day of battle did not fall below their high reputation. As soon as they recovered from the confusion caused by the infuriated elephants, their leader, the young Raja Jagat Singh of Kotah, placed himself at their head and charged straight against the middle of Nazir Khan's line.

The Usbegs recoiled two or three spear lengths before the impetuous fury of the charge. The Rajputs, encouraged by their success, pressed on and would have driven Nazir Khan's whole force out of the field, if they had only been well seconded by the Moguls. But the Moguls were at this time so fully engaged in defending themselves against our attack that they did not venture to take part in an offensive movement. Seeing the

danger to which Nazir Khan's force was exposed, I asked and received permission from Abdullah Khan to move with my five hundred and take the Rajputs in the rear

The Rajputs were now assailed before and behind, and cut off from the main body of Aurangzebe's army. They fought with the courage of a wild boar attacked on all sides by hunting dogs, and facing now one and now another of his assailants. In the desperate struggle many of them fell, but, until their swords and lances were blunted and broken, I must admit that they killed more of us than we killed of them. I myself for a few short moments had the honour of crossing swords with Jagat Singh. Our encounter, however, led to no decisive result, for our followers closed in on either side and the single combat was soon lost in the general mêlée. For the time I lost sight of Jagat Singh, and pressed hard on another Rajput chief, who stood in my path. After the exchange of some thrusts and parries I had managed to cut him down, when I myself received a wound on my sword arm that made me drop my weapon. Turning round I saw that my new assailant was again Jagat Singh, whose next blow would have

ended my life, for I was now unable to defend myself. But the uplifted sword never fell on my defenceless head. At the critical moment Colin, who as usual was watching over my safety as a mother watches her child, struck on the Rajput's crest a blow that felled him to the ground.

The wound I had received prevented me from taking any further part in the battle. During the rest of the fighting I was only a spectator. I saw how the devoted Rajputs tenderly picked up the body of their fallen prince, and, forming into a compact mass round him and their still unconquered standard, broke away from their perilous position through the gap between Nazir Khan's force and my five hundred. They presently joined their main army, but they had left half their number dead behind them. Then the whole army of Aurangzebe slowly withdrew southwards in the serried order which they had adopted when they recovered from the confusion due to the raging elephants. The Usbegs found that they could now make little impression by their attacks, and being exhausted by their great exertions in the long struggle against superior numbers, allowed

the enemy to retire unmolested for the present

Indeed there was little more fighting in the war. The snows of winter had begun unusually early, and it was extremely doubtful whether any of the Mogul army would get through the passes of the Hindu Kush and arrive at Cabul. Henceforward the campaign against Aurangzebe might safely be left to the powers of nature, which needed no assistance from such comparatively weak weapons as the sword and the spear. The Moguls struggled on southwards, suffering terribly from the intense cold and want of food, and often losing their way in the snows which obliterated all the landmarks. Their heavy losses could be computed in the following summer by the heaps of bones that were found scattered over the mountains. It was only a very small fraction of his grand army that at last, half-starved and frost-bitten, straggled after Aurangzebe into Cabul, in very different plight from that in which it had marched proudly out in the hope of achieving victory and conquest.

CHAPTER XXII.

RETURN TO BALKH

WHILE the Moguls were fighting their way through the snow to Cabul, we returned in triumph to Balkh. The cold weather did not prevent us from enjoying to the full the festivities that were arranged to celebrate our defeat of the invaders. There were wrestling matches, and archery contests, and feats of horsemanship. Great banquets were given to the soldiers, and poems were composed in honour of our victory. The poets showed the direction that popular favour took by celebrating Abdullah Khan and his white allies and ignoring Nazir Khan. There were even some verses recited that spoke of a marriage union between the princess and the Feringhi, whom fortune had sent to save the Usbegs from slavery.

The beautiful Zohra herself appeared in public with her ladies, and bestowed rich robes of honour on Abdullah Khan, on myself

and my foster-brethren, and on the Usbeg captains that had most distinguished themselves in the war

Nazir Khan went through the festivities with a gloomy countenance that ill accorded with the joy of all around him. His bearing made him still more unpopular, and on account of his ill-success in war he became generally known as Bebahrah¹. Yet the question of the succession to the throne had still to be decided, and he had many powerful adherents, especially among the orthodox mullahs, who declared that the Koran was entirely opposed to the sovereign power being entrusted to a woman. In the East the usual mode of deciding conflicting claims to a throne is civil war, and for civil war Nazir Khan prepared. Finding that in Balkh popular feeling was strongly opposed to his pretensions, he retired to Kunduz and there raised his standard. Few adherents joined him. The Usbegs, like most Mahometans, were firm believers in good and bad fortune, and shrank from enrolling themselves among the followers of a leader, who had been uni-

¹ Bebahrah = without a share, unfortunate The term is nearly equivalent to the Scottish "Tineman"

formly unsuccessful, to fight against a princess supported by one who seemed to be the favourite of fortune, and whom they believed to be aided by supernatural powers. His small following soon melted away, and he gave up the struggle without venturing to fight a battle for the crown he coveted. It was commonly reported that he had crossed the border and taken refuge in Persia.

Nazir Khan having thus retired, there was nothing to prevent Zohra from being enthroned as sovereign of the Usbeks. The people were all in her favour, and the soldiers of the victorious army were almost unanimous in their devotion to her cause. A considerable party, including what remained of the five hundred that had fought under my command, were so attached to me that they thought I deserved to be made commander-in-chief, or even to become the husband of the queen. They freely expressed their views, and were ready to do battle with those who refused to accept me as the king appointed by destiny. One part of the prophecy of the Fernghi seer, they urged, had been confirmed first by the similar prediction of their own Prophet

and afterwards by the ruin of the Mogul army. It might, therefore, be expected that the other part of the prophecy would be fulfilled by my marrying among the snows of Balkh the princess whom I had rescued from captivity, and whose nation I had saved from the yoke of the southern invaders

Such being the state of popular opinion, I determined not to lose by diffidence or hesitation the golden opportunity offered by fortune of gaining as my bride the noblest lady that ever claimed the chivalrous homage of man. The verses of my great leader, Montrose, came to my mind.—

“He either fears his fate too much,
Or his deserts are small,
Who dares not put it to the touch
To gain or lose it all”

I had certainly so far had very good reason to trust in my fortune, and I was not going to lose without an effort the great prize that she seemed to offer me. So I asked the princess to grant me the honour of an interview

At the hour appointed I went to her mother's house with the consciousness that



"SEE, SHE SAID, 'I HAVE EMBROIDERED A SCARF TO SUPPORT
YOUR POOR WOUNDED ARM'"

(B 116)

the happiness of the rest of my life depended on the result of our interview. Attended by the faithful Ayesha, my dear lady sat waiting for me in the reception-room, looking more beautiful than ever in her indoor dress, and with her cheek flushed by the glow of the great fire blazing on the hearth.

She first asked tenderly after my wound, reproaching herself that I had been hurt in her service.

"See," she said, "I have embroidered a scarf to support your poor wounded arm."

With that she called Ayesha, who brought a scarf of silk ornamented with flowers in needlework. They took off the leather sling with which my arm had been hitherto supported, and substituted in its place the silken scarf that my lady's own fair fingers had embroidered for me.

A strange feeling of diffidence now overcame me. I had come to the interview with a feeling of confidence in my fortune, resolved boldly to ask Zohra to be my bride, and repeating to myself the lines of Montrose that encouraged me to trust in my destiny. But now the line that stood out most clearly in my consciousness was that which suggested

an alternative reason for not putting it to the touch —

“He either fears his fate too much,
Or his deserts are small,
Who dares not put it to the touch
To gain or lose it all”

And what, I thought, are my deserts that I should claim as a bride one who is not only a princess, but whose beauty would make her fit to be the bride of the greatest king or emperor. As these thoughts flashed through my mind, far more rapidly than I can record them, I became tongue-tied for a time, and, when I recovered to some extent my power of speech, could only mutter indistinctly words expressive of my sense of my utter unworthiness.

“I came,” I said, “inspired by love with the audacity to ask you whether you could return my love. But as soon as I look on your peerless beauty, my presumption dies away like snow before the midsummer sun. Love you I must till the end of my life, but I cannot any longer abide in your presence to see you the bride of another. Now that my sword has helped you to recover the throne that is your

hereditary right and your due, I leave Balkh for ever and go to seek a soldier's death in some other land, and the sooner it comes the better'

So saying, I knelt down to kiss her hand, and then moved slowly and sadly towards the door. Strange to say, Zohra seemed to have lost the power of speech for the time, as I had done a few moments before. She sat silent as a marble statue gazing into the fire, whose flames no longer gave a glow of colour to her pale, pale cheek.

Perhaps I might have gone away and never seen my dear lady again, had not Ayesha come forward and placed herself between me and the door for which I was making

"Shame upon you!" she said. "Is a gentle lady more formidable than all the Moguls you have slain?"

"Why should I stay," I replied, "when I have no hope to cheer me?"

"Hope!" she exclaimed. "What did the Lady Zohra give you when you last asked her for hope?"

"She gave me a rosebud, the withered petals of which are now encased in a locket of gold, and it was then that I cut off a lock of her beautiful auburn hair."

“And have you no language of flowers in the West?” she asked. “Do you not know what a rose is the symbol of?”

“The rose to me has heretofore been a hostile sign. The rose of England has ever been opposed to the thistle of my native land.”

“Then know,” she said, “O thou that art but an infant in such matters, that in the poetry of the East the rose is the symbol of *love*. And if the full-blown rose signifies love, must I tell you what should be the meaning of the rosebud? Do ladies in your country give rosebuds and locks of their hair to those whom they do not love?”

A flood of rapture overspread my soul, almost robbing me of my senses. My eyes were suddenly opened and I cried out: “If the full-blown rose signifies complete love, the rosebud must mean the dawn of love and the hope of perfect love.” Then turning to my lady I stretched out my hands to her and said “Can this be true, or am I in a dream? Is it possible that my lady should return the love of a rough soldier such as I am?”

Then she turned to me, and a rosy flush overspread her soft cheeks as she pointed to the sling round my arm, on which was em-

broidered a full-blown rose with such marvellous skill that nature seemed to be mocked by the delicate workmanship of her cunning needle

I had now no reason to doubt my good-fortune. The symbol of the full-blown rose showed me that my lady's heart was wholly mine, and it would be my own fault now if I ever lost the precious possession

"And now," I said "that we are bound to each other by mutual affection, I must seal our love according to the custom of your lover's country by a kiss." I suited the action to the word, and again the rich flush overspread her beauteous face

Ayesha now retired to a discreet distance, and we talked together of love and happiness, as lovers do, in words that were sweet to ourselves but could not interest the outside world. My lady was ready, if I wished that she should do so, to leave her native land at once, and to follow me to my own country or wherever else I wished to go

"Love," she said, "is better than wealth and power. Let us go to some quiet retreat where we can be happy together, and free from the envy of Nazir Khan and all the greedy

and ambitious world But my mother! Shame on me, if my new-born happiness should make me forget my duty to her!"

I assured her that her duty not only to her mother, but also to her people, required her to stay in Balkh, and that I would stand by her side to support and defend her Heaven knows that it was not ambition or desire of kingly power that moved me I only thought of the good name and happiness of my lady, knowing well that she could not be happy, if she were in a moment of weakness to forget her duty and avoid the responsibilities of the crown to which she had been called by providence

Zohra and I were now affianced bride and bridegroom, and, as such, were allowed by the custom of the country to meet frequently If, as was doubtless the case, there were many who disapproved of their princess marrying a foreigner and a Christian, their murmurs of disapproval were unheard and unheeded by us Abdullah Khan, the most powerful noble in the land, was so devoted to the princess that her will was law to him, and, in spite of my being in their eyes an infidel, I was still a favourite with the army and the populace

on account of the part I had played in the war of independence. Thus without any apprehensions of danger, we happily passed the time that was to elapse before our marriage and Zohra's coronation, two events which were arranged to take place on the same day. Only sometimes our happiness seemed too perfect for this world, and we vaguely feared that it would not be permanent.

CHAPTER XXIV

AT THE TOMB OF AHMAD

ON the eve of the great day that was to complete our happiness, as I was busied with preparations for the double event, a note was slipped into my hand by a man who, before I had time to read it, suddenly disappeared from my sight. It was an anonymous letter bidding me come unaccompanied to the Tomb of Ahmad, on the outskirts of the city, at the hour of sunset, if I wished to save the princess from imminent danger. It was already late in the day, and I could only reach the place of meeting at the appointed time by starting at once, so I hastily threw my sheepskin coat round my shoulders and walked swiftly through the streets, which were carpeted with new-fallen snow, towards the city wall. In my hurried walk I regretted that I had come out entirely unarmed. But after all it did not much matter. As my right arm was still disabled by the wound

inflicted by the sword of Jagat Singh, it would be impossible for me to defend myself, should I be exposed to a treacherous attack.

The tomb was in one of the loneliest parts of the northern extremity of the city. When I arrived there, a man was pacing up and down impatiently. His head was muffled up, so that at first I could not recognize him. As soon, however, as I was near him, he threw aside his disguise and disclosed to view the countenance of Nazir Khan. A look of triumphant malice still further disfigured his ill-favoured countenance. He wasted no time in ceremonious salutations, such as Mahometans employ even in addressing those whom they hate.

“Dog of an infidel!” he exclaimed in furious tones. “So you thought you would marry a princess of the race of Shaiban and sit on the marble throne of Kai Kaoos, which by right belongs to me. Did you think that I, the descendant of a race of kings, would submit to such an insult from a homeless wanderer driven with disgrace from his own country? The princess you thought to make your bride is now outside the northern gate of the city, in charge of my trusty followers, who will

convey her to the prison allotted to her. As for you, little though you deserve it, you will have the honour of dying by my sword."

So speaking, he drew his sword and invited me to defend myself, well knowing all the while that, even if I had had a weapon, my wounded arm was powerless to wield it.

Here then I stood at the mercy of an unscrupulous foe, and worse than all, if what he said were true, my beloved bride was in his power. How I cursed myself for my folly in coming out alone in response to a nameless invitation! How terrible was the contrast between the anguish that now overcame me and the full tide of happiness in which I had been borne on towards my wedding-day! In spite of my indignation I strove to be calm, and succeeded.

"Surely," I said, "it is not worthy of the descendant of a line of mighty kings to slay in cold blood an enemy who cannot defend himself."

"What mercy may be shown to a vile infidel that would rule true believers?" he replied. "I will kill you with as little compunction as I would kill a village cur that ventured to snarl at me. So let us have no

more words, but prepare to receive the blow that will send you to perdition '.

In humble guise I placed my hands on my breast, resigning myself to my fate, and thinking sadly of the anguish of soul that my beloved was doomed to suffer. Life for her would, I knew well, be far worse than death to me. Suddenly a new thought flashed across my brain. My left hand on my breast was nearly in the position in which it should be to deliver a left-handed blow straight from the shoulder. My tutor, long ago, had taught me in boxing to defend with my right arm, and strike hard with my left. The thought came to me like an inspiration. While I still stood in the attitude of a suppliant, and my enemy was delaying the death-blow in order that he might gloat over his triumph and make me suffer longer from the prospect of death, I gently, and unobserved, closed my fist and drew back my elbow to give greater force to my blow. Then suddenly I struck hard for life, such a blow as I had never delivered before in all my boxing experience. Nazir Khan fell on the ground with his jaw broken, and such was the force of the collision between his mouth and my hand that my

own knuckles were cut. Scarcely had I felled my enemy, when Colin, Duncan, and Donelly, accompanied by four or five of my Usbeg regiment, burst upon the scene. All at once they plied me with questions, which I cut short impatiently.

"That villain," I said, pointing to my prostrate and speechless foe, "said that the princess was outside the northern gate of the city in charge of his followers. We must immediately go and see if his words are true. Every moment is precious."

We soon reached the gate and, passing through it, saw the marks of about a dozen footsteps in the snow. The gate-keeper told us that two litters had passed through with an escort half an hour before. We immediately hurried on the track of the footsteps, which, in spite of the fading light, were easily discernible on the new-fallen snow. Before we had proceeded more than a mile, the footsteps turned aside towards a copse on the right of the road. Entering the copse, we saw before us the two litters, which we recognized immediately as those of the princess and Ayesha. As we approached, the sentry gave the alarm, and the escort made an attempt at resistance.

But we soon overpowered them. There were only six or seven of Nazir Khan's men; the rest were the princess's own litter-bearers, who had been compelled by Nazir Khan and his retainers to carry the litters outside the city, by threats of instant death if they ventured to disobey. They were delighted at the rescue of their mistress, and would have joined in the fray, using as weapons the poles of the litters, if their aid had been required.

It may be imagined what joy it was for my lady and me to be reunited again and restored to the happiness of which we had been so nearly bereft. She had received a missive much the same as the one delivered to me, telling her that my life was in danger, and that, if she wished to save it, she must come without delay to the northern gate of the city. When she arrived there, to her horror she found herself in the power of Nazir Khan. He ordered his followers to take her and Ayesha in their litters to the copse in which we found them. Nazir Khan had then left them to keep his tryst with me, saying that he would rejoin them in the copse in an hour's time.

I next asked how Colin, Duncan, and Don-

elly had happened to come to the rescue so opportunely. It appeared that Donnelly had been waiting outside the palace-gate in the hope of getting an opportunity of seeing Ayesha. As the two litters passed him Ayesha bent forward to him and said. "We are going to the northern gate. I fear treachery. Follow us quickly if you ever wish me to speak to you again."

Donnelly was not slow to obey the order. Fortunately, on the way he fell in with Duncan and Colin and one or two men of my regiment, all of whom he called upon to accompany him. Before they reached the gate Colin saw, at some distance in front a figure leave the road and make for the Tomb of Ahmad. By my walk, and the way in which I used my left hand rather than my right in climbing the wall of the enclosure, he guessed who it was and told the others. Though only half-convinced, they followed his lead, and all together they jumped over the wall and ran to the tomb, arriving just at the moment when I had struck Nazir Khan to the ground.

In such conversation, and with many mutual congratulations and thanks, we returned

through the fading light to our respective places of abode, having been mercifully preserved from the danger which had threatened us

CHAPTER XXV

SANDY'S VISION FULFILLED

THE day had now come on which Zohra and I were to be married and crowned. Of course the marriage ceremony had to be performed according to the customs and religion of the country. It could not well be otherwise. No Christian priest or church was to be found in the whole of Central Asia. Some of the mullahs murmured that I was not a true Mahometan and therefore could not marry a Mahometan woman. Their murmurs were drowned in the voice of popular opinion, which maintained that one who had fought for the liberty of an oppressed Mahometan people must be a Mahometan. Besides, as seemed right, I conformed to the religion of the country, and attended the Mosque in Balkh as I would have attended the services of Roman Catholic churches in France or Spain. Not that I would have prayed in one of the idol temples in India. But the Mahometan religion I found was most sternly

opposed to all forms of idolatry, and there is much in common between the beliefs of Mahometans and Christians. The Mahometans worship the same great God that we worship, and they believe in all the great prophets of the Bible. They venerate Jesus Christ as the greatest of all who have revealed the will of God to man, and call him the Messiah, the Word of Truth, and the Word of God. Such being the case, I lived among the Usbeks without attacking their creed or in any way offending or opposing their religious prejudices. Some have since blamed me severely for my conduct. Much may be said on both sides; but this is the record of my life, and all I have to do is to set down faithfully what I really did, and submit my actions to the judgment of those who are wiser than I am.

Great preparations had been made to celebrate the approaching marriage and coronation. All the rooms of the palace were spread with rich Persian carpets, many of them embroidered with gold thread. Valuable presents were brought in by the Usbek lords, except the few who still adhered to Nazır Khan and refused to grace the ceremony with their presence. The palace resounded with strains of vocal

and instrumental music. The courtyard was full of acrobats and jugglers and masqueraders clad in the skins of various animals. All through the city banquets were given to the people. Although the law of Mahomet forbids the drinking of intoxicants, through this period of festivity the prohibition was tacitly disregarded, and the festive Usbeks gladdened their souls not only with the national drink, called Kimmiz, prepared from mares' milk, but also of oxymel, hippocras, brandy, and other liquors. Under the exhilarating influence of these festivities some of the gravest Usbek leaders danced, and, when Duncan charmed them with the performance of the sword-dance and Highland fling, they vainly endeavoured to emulate the grace and vigour of his movements. Colin's music on the bagpipes also gave such great delight that he had afterwards to teach the art to several Usbek musicians, who will, doubtless, transmit the accomplishment to their descendants. Indeed, the music of the bagpipes became so popular among the Usbeks that I am inclined to think it will be heard to the end of time on the mountains of Central Asia.

The nuptial knot was tied, as it is in Scot-

land, not in a church, but in the home of the bride's father. The grand cazi read aloud the marriage contract, and asked first Zohra and then me whether we consented to be wife and husband according to the terms of the contract. Here again the Mahometan law resembled the Scotch, the marriage consisting in our mutual consent given before witnesses. Then the cazi lifted up his hands and blessed us, saying "O great God, grant that mutual love may reign between this couple as it existed between Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Joseph and Zuleikha, Moses and Zipporah, his Highness Mahomet and Ayesha, and his Highness Ali and Fatima." We were now man and wife, and received the congratulations of those present.

The next event was Zohra's coronation, in which I, as her husband, had to take a prominent part. We were seated side by side on the great white marble throne, which, according to tradition, had been the throne of Cyrus. Tiaras of gold ornamented with rubies and diamonds were placed on our brows, and, according to the immemorial custom of Central Asia, gold and precious stones were showered upon our heads. Then all the chief nobles, in

token of allegiance, knelt down before us and offered us gifts, which we had to acknowledge by presenting them with costly robes of honour

And thus in the centre of Asia the vision of second-sight seen by Sandy in the Highlands of Scotland was fulfilled.

I must now very briefly relate the public and private events of the years during which we reigned at Balkh over the turbulent Usbeks. It is needless to dilate on our domestic happiness. I had learned the noble character of my wife before I married her, and every year that passed made me love her more. Two children were born to us, two strong and healthy boys. We gave them the names of Colin and Duncan, after my foster-brethren, who taught them from their earliest childhood to shoot the arrow, and to wield their toy swords. Ayesha, who soon after our marriage was wedded to Donnelly, acted as their nurse.

At first our rule was not only successful but very popular. We substituted more humane punishments for the cruel ones that had generally been resorted to in those regions before our time. We tried to establish strict

justice without regard to persons At first this made us popular among the common people, who appealed to us for protection Sometimes, however, poor peasants, who had been defended by us against the nobles who oppressed them, were secretly punished as soon as they left the capital and went back to the country, so that they gained little by our intervention in their behalf The nobles were irritated at such interference with their cherished privilege of oppressing the weak, which they considered to be their natural right This led to a rebellion, which had to be sternly suppressed by the help of the nobles who remained staunch to our cause But the struggle to maintain our authority became year by year harder and harder, as the memory of the Mogul invasion and the retreat of Aurangzebe became fainter in the popular recollection.

At length one day, a few months after the death of her beloved mother, Zohra said to me

“My dear husband, we have now maintained our position for ten years on the throne of Balkh We have tried hard to make our people happy and to teach them the value of justice and mercy They do not understand

us They long to return to the old ways of cruelty and oppression, when every man did what was right in his own eyes. We cannot raise the Usbeg to the level of your countrymen Need we any longer struggle against the stream, and try to make them happy by opposition to their nature and customs?"

"Surely you would not, my dear Zohia," I replied, "recommend that we should keep order by flaying the unruly alive and treading them under the feet of elephants as some of your ancestors used to do"

"Oh, well, Ronald," she said, "you need not talk about my ancestors! They acted according to their lights, much as your countrymen did when they cut off the thumbs of captive English archers No, I do not wish to inflict cruel death on our subjects; but, as they are getting more and more discontented, let us leave them to their own devices and go away to your country. Now that my mother is dead, I have no strong tie to bind me to my native land. You have suffered a long enough exile on my account Let us give up our sovereignty, pack up our possessions, and away to your bonnie Scotland."

As she spoke such words, an intense and

irresistible longing to see the hills and dales of my native land, and to hear once more the beloved northern speech, came over me. I blessed my dear wife for the kindness that prompted her proposal, and determined to carry it out as soon as possible. For hours we talked together of how happy we and the children should be in the far-away land of my birth.

There was no difficulty in arranging our abdication. Indeed, the willingness of the Usbegs to get rid of us might have caused us some chagrin had we not consoled ourselves with the thought that it was due to stupidity Nazir Khan, who had never recovered from the effects of the blow he had received by the tomb of Ahmad, had been dead for some years. The next heir to the throne, putting aside little Colin and Duncan, was his son, who was popular among the nobility, and would probably have soon raised a formidable rebellion against us if we had not retired of our own free will. A council of the leading Usbegs that we convened at Balkh unanimously agreed that, if we left the country, he should succeed us. Thus with our good will he was crowned on the white marble throne of Cyrus

as we had been many years before. It was agreed that we should take away with us my wife's large private fortune, which, for convenience of transport, we converted into precious stones. We had also still intact, with the exception of the ruby given to the friendly mullah on the Hindu Kush, the gems taken from the cavalier who tried to stop us and take us back to Cabul. If we could take all these jewels safe to Europe we should be richer than many of the greatest nobles in England and Scotland. So, having made our arrangements, we waited for the first convenient chance of going south that might offer itself to us.

CHAPTER XXVI

DELHI AGAIN

A GOOD opportunity of starting on our return journey was afforded by a joint embassy that the Usbegs of Balkh and Samarcand were now sending to Delhi. Aurangzebe had defeated or put to death all his brothers, and held his father, Shah Jehan, in captivity. He had thus become supreme in India, and it was considered advisable to cultivate friendly relations with him. An embassy was therefore sent to offer him congratulations on his succession to the peacock throne, and presents of the most valuable products of Tartary. We determined to accompany this embassy to Delhi, partly for the sake of the protection afforded by its escort, and partly because, as members of an embassy, we should have no reason to fear Aurangzebe's resentment for the active part we had taken in driving him and his troops across the Hindu Kush.

It is hardly possible to leave a country in which you have lived for many years without

some feeling of regret. Although the people, as a whole, might be accused of ingratitude, and had not appreciated our efforts to better their condition, we had many faithful friends, especially among the remnants of the five hundred who had fought so well by my side in the war of liberation. Above all, we were sorry to bid farewell for ever to Abdullah Khan, who had staunchly supported us through evil report and good, even when he could not quite understand our method of government, and thought we were foolishly merciful. He gave us a splendid farewell banquet. When we left Balkh, he accompanied us for a day's journey on our southward route, and burst into tears when the time came to bid him a long farewell.

"Go," he said to me, "and may you be happy, as you deserve to be. And after all it is best that you should go away, for there is no land to live and die in like one's native country. But when you are far away, think sometimes of your old friend. And thou too, Zohia, my daughter—" But here his feelings overcame him and he could say no more.

"Never," I replied, "shall we forget or allow our children to forget the best warrior

and most faithful friend we have known in Asia ”

So speaking I turned aside to wipe away the tear that would rise to my eyes. It is needless to say that Zohra was deeply moved, and the children, seeing her weep, wept also, until the next interesting object they saw on the road diverted their thoughts to mirth again.

When we arrived at Delhi, Zohra, by my advice, entirely gave up the restrictions laid upon women by the custom of the East. As the wife of a European she exercised the privileges enjoyed by her sex in the West, and appeared freely in public, even more than she had been able to do in Balkh. Thus we were able to visit all the wonderful sights of the great city created by Shah Jehan. Our constant companion was M. Bernier, a French traveller, who had resided for five years at the court of the Great Mogul, and had managed to keep his head on his shoulders through all the dangerous period of the war of succession. He was studying India with a view to writing an account of the country to enlighten European scholars, and we derived much instruction and delight from his rich stores of

information, especially when he told us the story of the war between Aurangzebe and his brothers, and how Aurangzebe had overcome them all by his courage, cunning, and freedom from all scruples of conscience. In his company we explored the public and private halls of audience in the palace, and the mosque called the Pearl Mosque on account of the white and gray marble of which it is built. Then in the city we visited the great Jumma Mosque, newly finished by the labours of five thousand workmen for six years, and the old black mosque, built in the fourteenth century, long before the establishment of the Mogul dominion. Also, as was fit and proper, we went to the Chandni Chauk, a fine street shaded with rows of trees, in the rich shops of which my wife bought many beautiful specimens of the Indian jeweller's work which now adorn her boudoir in Ochterlony Castle.

On the day on which the Usbeg embassy was received I once more took my place in the splendid private hall of audience, and read over its arches the Persian verses which told those present that

“If on earth be an Eden of bliss,
It is this, it is this, none but this”.

And truly, if bliss can be secured by gold and priceless gems, the couplet was true; but methinks there are more perfect Edens of bliss to be found on the heathery moors of Scotland, the poor inhabitants of which do not know what it is to possess gold and diamonds. All seemed unchanged, except that Aurangzebe sat now on the peacock throne in the place of his father, Shah Jehan, who was still living in honourable captivity in Agra, where he could daily visit the beautiful monumental shrine of white marble he had erected in honour of his lost wife.

The Usbeg ambassadors were ushered into the presence with great honour. They were clad in their national dress, except that they had been compelled to discard their sheep-skin coats as intolerably hot in the climate of the Indian plains. Rough, uncultured, simple men they looked in contrast with the princes and courtiers, in rich robes ornamented with jewels and gold embroidery, by whom they were surrounded. But if they were inferior in culture and intelligence, they had the superior stature and muscles that mark the men who have to struggle with snow-storms

and climb mountains. From their proud bearing they seemed to be conscious of this themselves. They held their heads high, and were unabashed by all the magnificence displayed before their eyes. As they looked calmly around them, and up to the silver-plated roof above their heads, I could not help thinking that they were wondering whether they might not themselves, at no distant date, sweep down like an avalanche from the northern mountains and found a new empire in India, as the Moguls, the Afghans, the Scythians, and the Aryans had done before, and then all the jewels and gold of India would be theirs.

The letters they brought were taken from them and opened by one of the principal nobles, who handed them on to Aurangzebe. After he had read them he ordered the attendants to present each of the ambassadors with a turban and a rich robe of embroidered silk. Then the ambassadors brought forward such of their gifts as could be brought into the presence chamber—rubies from the mines of Shighnan, lapis lazuli, and specimens of fresh fruit and dry fruit, camel-loads of which they had brought with them. There were also fine

horses and camels, which of course could not be brought into the reception-room. After Aurangzebe had conversed with them for some time about the beauty and choice productions of their country, of which he himself could not have very pleasant memories, he dismissed them, not without expressing a wish that they would often visit him as long as they chose to stay in Delhi.

In the evening of the same day we obtained permission to visit the palace garden. We went there accompanied by our two children and by Donelly and Ayesha. How peaceful it all seemed now, and how different was our quiet retrospective conversation from the passionate vows I had there offered to my lady eleven years before! I showed her the little postern gate by which I had entered, and made her stand again on the very spot on which she had first burst upon my sight in all her beauty. As we talked lovingly upon the past, absorbed in ourselves and forgetful of all around us, a harsh voice broke in upon our conversation:

“And hae ye forgotten the auld gairdener that was fule eneuch to risk his craig that ye might hae a blink o’ yer bonnie princess?”

It was Maxwell who stood before us. His face was more wrinkled than before, and the gray of his beard had turned to white; but it was the same kindly face, with its kindliness only half-concealed under a mask of cynicism, the face that I remembered so well as that of the man to whom I owed more than to any other man in the world.

"Oh, Mr. Maxwell," exclaimed Zohra, "and is that you? I used often to ask you for your beautiful flowers, and you never refused me. I have only one little thing to ask you now, and that is that you will come away with us to bonnie Scotland" (for so my dear lady had learned to call the land of her adoption which was only known to her in imagination), "and, if you still like to work among flowers, we will give you a fine large garden to look after."

"Aweel, young leddy," he replied, "I never cud hae the heart to refuse ocht ye asked me for, and I'm thinking ye'll need an ill-faur'd and ill-tempered auld carle to keep thae laddies frae tramplin' on yer flooer-beds. Jist look at thae young callants pum' the emperor's best roses as if they were gowans on the brae. Come awa' oot o' that, ye wee

imps, or I'll ca' in the police and hae ye lock'd up in the black hole."

At first the boys were rather frightened by his angry voice; but they were soon reassured when he himself culled for them and their mother posies of the choicest flowers that the beautiful garden produced.

"Ay," he went on, "I'll gang back wi' ye to bonnie Scotland. Thae flooers are gey bonnie, but it wad be gran' to see the purple heather bloomin' again. I'm thinkin' by this they'll hae forgotten aboot that tuilzie lang syne whan I cracked the skull o' the son o' the laird o' Auchinleck. Forbye, they mebbe never heard o' it in your part o' the country. So I'll gang wi' ye to your side o' Scotland and ca' mysel' by anither name, and keep a calm sough, and naebody will be ony the wiser"

"And what," I asked, knowing the interest Shah Jehan had taken in the gardens, and the high regard in which he had held his Scotch gardener, "will Aurangzebe and his gardens do without you?"

"Him!" he exclaimed scornfully. "He'll hae sma' sorrow at our parting. This lang-nebbit ane's no like the auld ane. He's a'

skin and banes and has nae mair heart than a deil. He disna care for flooers or ither bonnie things. A' he cares for is power and the book o' the Prophet. Whan I gang awa', he'll jst say that there's ane less unbeliever in Delhi, and he'll be gey pleased to keep the money he gies me as wages in his ain pooch."

I could not help remarking that Aurangzebe had shown some magnanimity in allowing us to pass in peace through his dominions after all we had done to foil his plans of conquest.

"He would sune cut your heids aff, or clap you in prison and there give you every morning a cup of the poust, if he thocht ye wad gie him ony mair trouble. Dae ye ken what the poust is? It's poppy infused in water, and it mak's ye weaker in mind and body day by day until you die a puir feckless fule. That's what he's given to mony of his cousins and nevoys for fear they micht ae day try and wun the throne. He disna spare folk because he lo'es them, or kill them because he hates them. I'm thinking he neither lo'es nor hates onybody. So he disna care for revenge. He'll get nae guid and avoid nae danger by killing you, as you are ganging awa' to a far country. If he thocht ye ever meant to return

to Balkh and raise the Usbegs to fecht against him, my certes ye wud gey sune be put oot o' the way o' daeing him ony harm."

Maxwell was quite right. Aurangzebe made no objection to his departure, and, a few days later, he joined our caravan when it started for Surat.

We reached that city without misadventure, though not without apprehension of being attacked on the way by the marauding bands of the Maratha chieftain Sivaji, who not long before our arrival had plundered Surat for three days and carried away from it great store of gold, silver, pearls, and silken cloth. The English merchants, however, had escaped plunder by getting the help of the sailors from the ships, and gallantly defending their houses. The head of the English factory told me the whole story of Sivaji's attack on the city, how he cruelly cut off the hands of those who would not or could not reveal the places where treasure was hid, and how he spared the religious house of the Roman Catholic missionaries. So strangely are some men's minds compounded of such contradictory qualities as bloodthirsty cruelty and avarice, and respect for religion and virtue. The merchant who told us all

this was a courteous gentleman, though a Puritan, and secured us a passage for London in a large new ship, called the *Hector*, that was just about to start on her homeward voyage

CHAPTER XXVII

BACK TO SCOTLAND

IT was at Surat that I first heard a clear and consecutive account of all that had happened since I left Scotland. They told me the whole story of the execution of the king and of my noble leader, the Marquis of Montrose, of the battles of Worcester and Dunbar, of Cromwell's Protectorate, and lastly of his death, and how he had been buried like a king in Westminster Abbey, and succeeded by his son Richard as quietly as if they had been descended from a long line of anointed kings. Truly we had little reason to base hopes of happiness on what we heard of the state of political affairs in England and Scotland, but nevertheless we had had enough of the East, and I was determined to go back to the home of my fathers, whatever might be the fortune that awaited us there.

We embarked on board the *Hector* at Surat on the first day of the year 1660. Our voyage of five months would have seemed much longer

but for the pipes of Colin and the gambols of the two boys, who were never weary of exploring the mysteries of the deck and the cabins, and could hardly be restrained from climbing the rigging. At last we reached the English Channel, and, passing through the Straits of Dover on the morning of May 22nd, approached Scheveling Bay, from the sandy shores of which the Hague is three miles distant. Long before we reached the shore it was evident that something remarkable was going on. There was a considerable fleet riding at anchor, with all kinds of flags flying, and great guns were being continually fired. As it was evident that the guns were not fired in anger, our skipper sailed into the bay to enquire what it was all about.

The news we heard was so astounding that it completely took our breath away. A great counter-revolution had taken place in England, the rule of the Commonwealth was over, and the ships we saw before us were the finest vessels of the British fleet waiting to convey His Majesty King Charles II to Dover. The king himself, with his courtiers, was on the shore, and seemed to be on the point of embarking.

Being extremely eager to see his majesty and kiss his hand, I immediately chartered a boat to take my wife, my children, and myself to shore. It was not very easy to land. Not far from us a boat conveying some gay gallants was upset, and their fine feathered hats were tossed to and fro on the surf. We were more fortunate, however, and managed to get to shore with dry skins.

A multitude of fine gentlemen were on the sands, walking about and talking. For some time we felt lost in the crowd and painfully conscious of the contrast between our weather-beaten, old-fashioned, and semi-oriental garments and the fine dresses of the courtiers.

"Do let us go somewhere and buy ourselves new clothes," exclaimed Zohra, with the regard for externals that characterized her like the rest of her sex.

"Very well," said I, "we will take a coach to the Hague, and make ourselves more presentable before we approach our king."

I was just about to do so, when my eye fell on a figure that seemed familiar to me. Still more familiar sounded the Scotch accent in which he was oburgating a Dutch boatman.

I tapped him on his broad back, and asked

him if he happened to know the Laird of Cassencarrie.

He turned round sharply, and said

“I was yince ca’ed the Laird of Cassencarrie mysel’, and I’m that still, but noo the king has made me a knight, and they maistly ca’ me Sir David Ramsay. And wha may you be, I maun speir, though ye ken me, and though I hae seen somebody gey an’ like ye sometime and somewhere?”

He was one of the few Lowland lairds who had fought under Montrose’s banner. We had been companions-in-arms in many a bloody field, and, when I told him who I was, he embraced me heartily, and insisted on taking me at once to see the king, in spite of my remonstrances on account of the shabbiness of my clothes. While this controversy was going on, and I was telling him in a few words all that had happened to me during the past twelve years, a group of gentlemen came walking along. My old friend immediately took his hat off and bowed low to the foremost of them, a tall, dark-faced man in a black perwig, plainly but richly dressed, and whispered to me “The king! the king!” I knelt down to kiss his hand. He graciously raised me up and asked

me to tell him my whole story, as the few words he had overheard had whetted his curiosity to hear the rest

"But," he said, "I always like best to walk about when I am talking or listening. So let us take a few turns up and down the beach."

Thus, strange to relate, I found myself walking up and down the shores of Scheveling Bay in familiar converse with the king of Great Britain and Ireland, and so admirable was his tact and courtesy that I felt no embarrassment at his condescension, but could tell him my story much as I would have told it to my old friend the Laird of Cassencarrie. He was deeply interested in all that had befallen me, or courteously pretended to be so. When my story was finished, we returned to Zohra and the children, who had been talking all the while to Sir David Ramsay. The king joined in the conversation, paid Zohra a graceful compliment which made her look still more beautiful, and made some funny remarks to the children.

"And now," he said, in conclusion, "is there anything I can do to smoothe your passage to your native land?"

I thanked his majesty for his kindness, and

said "Since my good fortune has brought me here on the eve of your majesty's return to your own, it will be the proudest day in my life, if I may see your majesty receive the welcome of your subjects at Dover."

"Your request is granted," he said. "It would ill become us, returning from exile to our ancestral home, if we were discourteous to another discrowned king who is coming to live as an exile in our dominions."

Then he turned to a bustling little man, rather gaudily dressed in a white lace coat and wide canons, and said to him

"Mr Pepys, you will kindly provide a cabin for Sir Ronald MacAlpine and his family on our own ship, and arrange suitable accommodation for his retainers in any other vessel that may be convenient"

When I informed the king that I had not the honour of being a knight, he graciously replied that he would put that right as soon as he arrived at London, when he intended to confer knighthood on those who had distinguished themselves by their valour and devotion in the late civil troubles.

Mr Pepys now took us in charge, and arranged to have my foster-brothers, Donelly,

and Ayesha brought ashore with all our light luggage. In the meantime he said that I, with Zohra and the children, might take a coach to the Hague and pass the night there. The king would not embark until the following morning. If we returned to Scheveling Bay an hour after sunrise, all would be ready for our embarkation in the royal fleet. So we drove over to the Hague, and Zohra had the gratification of supplying herself, the children, and me with handsome clothes in the latest fashion, the very best that the Dutch tailors and milliners could produce at a moment's notice.

When we returned to Scheveling Bay in the morning, Mr Pepys was pleased to remark that we all looked "mighty fine" in our new clothes, but suggested to my wife that, if she wished to be abreast of the fashion, she should put two or three black patches on her face. This suggestion she rejected with indignation at the time, but afterwards, when she went to London and saw all the other fine ladies wearing patches, she succumbed to the prevailing fashion.

We presently embarked on the *Naseby*, which, as it was the finest ship in the English

navy, had been selected to convey the king, the rest of our party sailed with the young Duke of Gloucester in the *Swiftsure*. The king, his two brothers, and the Prince of Orange dined that day together on the *Naseby*, which was no longer to bear that name. For after dinner the king gave it instead his own name. Then the Duke of York went to the *London*, the Duke of Gloucester to the *Swiftsure*, the Prince of Orange to the shore, and we weighed anchor. A favourable wind soon wafted us over to Dover, where the sands were black with the crowds of people assembled to welcome the king.

The king, as he had promised, knighted me soon after our arrival in London. For some time we remained in the great city, participating in the national joy at the restoration of the ancient line of kings. But after a time the continual round of festivity began to pall upon us, and my dear wife was shocked and frightened by the licentiousness that prevailed in the court. I, for my part, was longing to get back to my own native land and to my clan, which was now waiting for my return as eagerly as the whole nation had looked for-

ward to the home-coming of the king. For my elder brother had died childless, and I was now the chief of the clan MacAlpine.

So we gladly turned our faces northwards, and in due time reached Scotland. I cannot attempt to describe my feelings when I crossed the border and stood once more on my native land. They were too deep for words, and I could not but kneel down and kiss the sacred soil from which I had so long been an exile. With what joy I recognized and pointed out to my wife Edinburgh and the surrounding hills and castles, and told her all the old tales of love and war with which they were associated. And then at last we entered the lands of Clan Alpine. All the clansmen in their tartans were drawn up to meet us, and to the skirling of the pipes playing "Hame, hame to oor ain countree" we moved on in a kind of triumphal procession to the long uninhabited castle of Ochterlony, in which my ancestors had lived for many centuries. What a hearty reception we received, and with what joy and pride they all paid their respects to my gentle wife! Little we recked of the kingdom and the wealth we had left behind us in the heart of central Asia. Here, indeed, we felt that

we were really king and queen, for we reigned without rivals in the hearts of our devoted clansmen, any one of whom would have been proud to die for us or for our children

Often in that golden summer-time, as we sat on the terrace of our Highland home, looking out on the distant mountains purple with heather, and smelling the fragrance of the flowers in the garden that flourished under Maxwell's care, would my wife remind me of the Persian verses we had seen in the Private Hall of Audience at Delhi, and tell me that they ought rather to be written on the walls of Ochterlony Castle "For," she said, "there is no place where the sun shines as bright, and the sky is as blue, and the heart is as true as in my husband's home, and

'If on earth be an Eden of bliss,
It is this, it is this, none but this' "

NOTES

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9 **Balkh**, the capital of Bactriana, an Afghan province between the Hindu Kush and the Oxus, is said to be on the site of Bactria, one of the oldest cities of the world, now a decayed place, though still spoken of as "the mother of cities" According to tradition it was founded by Nimrod

cockle-shell, small boat

northern sea, North Sea, the part of it between Scotland and Norway

applicable to my case, was not true of him, because he did return, as the story tells, to Scotland

Tippermuir, near Perth, where Montrose with his Highlanders and his Irish defeated the Covenanters

Inverlochy, a place near Fort William, where Montrose defeated the Campbells under their chief, the Marquis of Argyre

Kilsyth, a town in Stirlingshire, about thirteen miles north east of Glasgow There Montrose defeated the Covenanters under Baillie

fatal field Montrose was surprised and defeated there by David Leslie, and all chances of Royalist success ended **Philpfaugh** is in Selkirkshire, on the Yarrow, some three miles from the town of Selkirk

10 **hour of misfortune**, time of bad luck

fancy free, not in love with anyone

made a conquest, &c, made me fall in love with her

alluring whispers, &c, hope told him of the great things he should do, and so drew him on Of "Hope told a flattering tale"

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10 **be dispersed**, &c, that instead of misfortune and misery I should later enjoy luck and success, and forget all my sufferings

have never been known, &c, what he has foretold has always happened

light of prophecy, &c, his power to see visions of what would hereafter take place

that threatened the liberties, &c, that was fighting to conquer and enslave the people

jewelled tiara, a head-dress or crown with jewels in it

11 **escaped from the rout**, got away from the crowd of frightened fugitives

Donelly, the Irishman The chief support of Montrose came from twelve hundred disciplined Irish, who landed on the west coast of Scotland

lugger, a small vessel with two or more masts, and with four cornered sails set fore and aft

steer for Norway, direct their boat towards Norway

Muscovy, the name used for Russia in those times, from Moscow, the chief city

would be realized, would come true

my destiny would, &c, what fate had decreed for me would be fulfilled

to take down, &c, to lower all the sails and put the boat before the wind

began to leak, to let in water through fissures, or breaks or cracks

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- 12 for a watery grave, for being drowned
 cheat me, &c , prevent me from becoming a king, as Sandy had said I would become
 to be swallowed up, to sink under
 humane, &c , kindly or merciful and good-tempered
 large-hearted hospitality, great kindness, taking us for guests
 lay to our right, &c , the English coast to the right and the Continental to the left
- 13 obviously perilous, there could be no doubt that it was dangerous
 the lee coast, the coast towards which the wind was blowing
 unnecessary, &c , there should be no time lost needlessly
 undermanned, had too small a crew
 offered no attractions, was not a country we cared to stay in
 of Sandy's vision, that appeared to Sandy when in a prophetic mood
 prospect of unbounded, &c , the chance that they should gain more than they saw any likelihood of ever spending
- 14 incidents that diversified, things that made the daily work on board ship less like what every other day's work had been
 porpoises (pork fishes), kinds of seals met with in northern seas
 "Flying Dutchman", a spectral ship, supposed, according to the story, to have been condemned on account of the blasphemy of its captain to sail for ever in the waters off the Cape of Good Hope, and never to reach port The sight of it was a bad omen, indicating bad weather
 thirty leagues, ninety miles
 maggoty biscuits, long kept biscuits that had gone bad
- 15 emporium, great trading centre
- 16 carving ourselves, &c , making fortunes for ourselves out of India's vast wealth
 ways and means, &c , what had we to help us to make the fight for wealth?

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- 16 presence of our swords, &c , the fact that we soldiers were on board had been an assurance against sea robbers
 Andrea Ferrara, a name given only to a broadsword or claymore, meaning one of the best make of broadswords
- 17 targets, shields carried on left arm and used in defence
 bagpipes, a wind musical instrument much used by Scottish Highlanders The wind is blown into a bag held under the arm, and from there is forced by the pressure of the arm through different tubes, thus producing the music
 consummate mastery, very extraordinary skill
 sword-dance, a favourite step dance with Scottish Highlanders, danced in the spaces formed by crossing two naked swords
 capable of sustaining, able to endure
 preferred to follow, &c , chose to do as I did
- 18 Naseby, the last great battle between King Charles I and the Puritans The King was utterly defeated
 fanatics and traitors, men religiously mad, and men false to king and country
 fifteen hundred, &c The Irish Roman Catholics had without warning murdered their Protestant neighbours in 1641, and were active rebels against Parliament Charles I could not employ them in England, but the Earl of Antrim promised to send 10,000 of them over to Scotland to support the royal cause Only 1200, however, landed in Argyle
 tender mercies, the pitiless cruelty
 did not shake, &c , did not make think of staying behind
 splendid marksman, a very good shot
- 19 from a social point of view, as a person with whom one had a great deal to do
 sanguine temper, disposition to look on things hopefully

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19 of the stalwart class, &c., among the big strong fishermen, of whom he was one

adventurous spirit, fond of danger and of new experiences

fabulous wealth, &c India was then considered enormously rich

20 two voyages, the voyage to India and the voyage home

to prevent their wives &c, to keep their wives from marrying other men

crop-eared, &c, terms applied by the Royalists to their opponents, some of whom, for offences against the King, had had their ears cut off, and all of whom showed their piety by singing psalms, and by living strictly according to what they thought God's law

Neither commerce nor, &c, we neither liked trade nor traders

theological controversies, quarrels and discussions about religion

the princess of our dreams, the princess I had come from home to marry on account of the predictions of a Highland seer

arriving at the goal, succeeding in what we set out to do

diverted, &c turned so far away and for such a length of time

21 recommended, advised.

to effect the reduction, &c, to conquer the rebels, or reduce them to order

Urdu, the form of Hindustani spoken and written by Mahometans in India

22 colloquial Hindustani, the Hindustani used in ordinary conversation

fluent mastery, &c, I could use it easily, and speak it rapidly

Shah Jehan (1627 to 1658) succeeded his father Jehangir, against whom he was in revolt

snows of Central Asia The Tibetan Table-land and the Pamir Plateau are so high in parts that the snow never melts

23 Samarcand, the capital of the province of the same name in Russian Turkestan, an old and very famous city

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23 Kunduz, the capital of the district of the same name, is on the Amu Darya.

his heart failed him, he became hopeless

Uzbeks, a mixed Turki race of cultivators, the rulers in Bokhara, &c The Aryans settled here are known as Tajiks

settle the country, restore order in the country

mountains of Central Asia here the Hindu Kush and their extensions westward, the Koh-i Baba and the Safid Koh

24 caravanseral, a place where caravans are put up

reception of strangers, lodging of foreigners, where outsiders were taken in

"beasties", water carriers Cf "The regimental beastie, Gunga Dhin" (Kipling) The *beastie* (or *bhusti*) uses a leather bag, called a *masak*, which he carries on his back.

25 palanquins, long, low, closed carriages in which the reclining traveller is carried on the shoulders of the bearers

reciprocate our feelings, to wonder at us and take an interest in us

gave access to all, &c, let all in to see him who wished to do so

26 from a far country, from a distant land

embrace opportunity, take the good chance that now offered.

for the occasion, for the visit to the Emperor

very limited number, very small number

plaid, an outer wrap worn by Highlanders over the shoulders and round the upper part of the body

retainers, followers hired for fighting

Earl of Essex Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, Elizabeth's commander in Ireland, having provoked the Queen's displeasure, travelled over to England, and rushed to her presence without waiting to remove the stains of travel from his person or clothes

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- 26 attracted a considerable amount, &c, made people look at us and wonder about us
- 27 reception, formal admission of visitors to his presence by the Emperor
arrogated, haughtily took to himself without asking anyone's leave
- 28 peacock throne This famous throne was part of the spoil carried off by Nadu Shah when he sacked Delhi in 1739
- 29 raised above, &c he had nothing more to hope for from the world
oriental obeisance, their exceedingly humble prostrations before him
vouchsafing us, thinking it worth while to grant us
crestfallen, downhearted, in low spirits
- 30 a rich oriental robe, a splendid Indian or Eastern dress
invariably observed, always kept, never forgotten
- 31 singular circumstance, uncommon, out of the way, matter of affair
roundly abusing, very vigorously blaming or finding fault with
- 32 He saw the force, saw how unanswerable the arguments were
our conversation, &c, what we said to each other might not be overheard
cross-grained, ill-tempered and unyielding
to explain the strength, &c, to show what powers the different rulers had, and to tell him what they were likely to do
His ignorant depreciation, the small value which, on account of his ignorance, he put on the powers of European States
- 33 petty rajas, small subordinate rulers
the subjugation of, the conquest, the forcing the people of Balkh and Badakshan to submit
Badakshan, the north eastern part of Afghanistan between the

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- Hindu Kush and the Amu Darya or Oxus
- 33 inured to the endurance, &c, so hardened we could bear with out discomfort
- 34 giving directions, &c, telling the workmen what to do
assuage his surliness, to make him less cross and ill tempered
a bonnie eneuch, a quite satisfactorily pretty
thievin' caterans, thieving marauders
- 35 crouselly, proudly, pertly, boldly
Highlandmen, the people of the Highlands of Scotland Maxwell is a Border or Lowland Scots name
Its bearers were naturally bitterly opposed to the Highlanders, who frequently descended in bands to plunder the Lowlands
gey chiel, a very wild fellow
gard him keep, &c, forced him to say nothing offensive
among the great ones, people of high rank and much power
guid wages, high wages
A rowing stane, &c The English proverb is 'A rolling stone gathers no moss', that is, people who are constantly moving from one situation to another do not become wealthy
- 36 awfu' lang journey, frightfully long way off
I dinna ken, &c, I don't see how the Emperor could manage if I left
dee here, die in this land
fechtin' for their liberties, fighting for freedom, their rights as free men
lang syne, long ago
greeting her een oot, &c, crying or weeping herself nearly blind
heart beat tumultuously, stirred me greatly
- 37 my dreams, whom it had been prophesied I should marry
secluded their women, &c, shut up their women so that strangers could not see them
impetuosity, headlong eagerness
caller air fresh an pure whole some air

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37 braw young birkie, handsome
showy, young fellow

gin the emperor &c, if t came
about that the Emperor, &c, gin
= given that

ane nor the tither, the one nor
the other

wad = would, hae = have,
lang = long

38 "They that wull", &c, a Scot
tish proverb meaning that, if a
man has determined to follow a
course, however ruinous, he must
be allowed to follow it

oot = out, sneck = shut, wun
in = manage to get in, ahint = be
hind bonnier = prettier, aiblins
= perhaps, possibly, baith o' us
= both of us

39 prospect of going, the seeming
likelihood that they would go

audacious attempt, exceeding
bold and hazardous thing I was
going to try to do

attract attention, canse people
to notice

accountred, dressed and armed

40 concealed by the darkness,
&c, it was too dark for them to
see how fair I was

walked in the path, &c, was
going the way to fulfil the pro-
phesies about me

postern gate, private gate or
entrance into the garden

ensconced myself, &c, hid or
sheltered myself behind the bushes

awaited the course, &c,
watched or looked out for what
would happen

unrelieved by any outbursts,
&c, there was no laughing, only
the voices of people in sorrow

bearing and tone, &c, the way
she moved and the way she spoke

41 Great Bear, a group of stars in
the northern sky to the seven prin-
cipal of which the names of the
seven *rishus* have been given

insensibility, want of feeling,
callousness

intuition of love, the power
which love gives of knowing truths
about the loved one otherwise than
through the senses

divine, guess truly

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41 embodiment of the dreams
the princess in person of whom I
had dreamt as the one I was fated
to marry

invisible links, &c, fate had de-
creed, though one could see no
reason why, that our lives should
be bound together

knight means boy or servant,
but is used chiefly to indicate a
member of a military order, or, as
here, a soldier who devotes himself
to the championship of a lady

reveal my presence, let others
know I was in the garden

42 controlled herself, checked, or
did not act on, the impulse

Frangistan, Europe

release, &c, to free her and re-
store her to her dominions

treated with all honour,
every respect will be shown you.

a bold dash, &c, try your
utmost, though it seems scarce
possible, to get free

surmounted the screen, &c,
rose to such a position that it
threw its light down on her direct,
no longer through the leaves

coronal, wreath or covering of
the crown of her head

43 inferred, concluded, arrived at
as an explanation

especially for a woman, &c,
in the East, where women are not
so tall as in the West, remarkably
tall

severe line, sober, restrained,
markedly simple

Emily, the sister of Hippolyte
the Queen of the Amazons, who
married Theseus She is the hero-
ine of Chaucer's *Knights Tale*
Chaucer thus describes her

"Emelve, that fairer was to sene
Thanne is the lilye on her stalke
grene,

And fresher than the May with
floures newe

Joan Beaufort married James I
of Scotland, then a prisoner in
England He, in his poem, "The
King's Quhair", describes her as

"The fairest or the freschest younge
floure

That e'er I saw methought before
that hour"

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- 43 Stuart line, the kings of Scotland, and afterwards of England, from the middle of the fourteenth century
- 44 connived, allowed to take place (usually contrary to duty)
- 45 fraught, &c, come bringing your life nearer its close
deftly, with great neatness and skill.
- 46 Cabul, the capital of Afghanistan (more commonly Kabul), on chief route between India and Central and Western Asia
proper measure, &c, if how many they were could be thought a right way of judging how strong the force was
- 47 unwieldy mass, huge body hard to move
take hostile action against, make war on, fight against
Muscovy, Russia
virtually actually, if spoken of rightly
- 48 the tables were turned, &c, the winners or victors became the losers or vanquished
marauders, &c, bodies of plunderers or robbers
to lose their king, &c, the brave king of the Usbeks was killed
untoward event, unfortunate or unlucky incident
a warrior of some repute, one who had gained some fame as a soldier
cunningly fostered, Aurangzebe craftily made the parties more bitter against each other
- 49 supporter of the rights, &c, pretended he was trying to gain the throne for the princess
guerilla warfare, an irregular war in which, without coming to a pitched battle, as much harm as possible is done to the enemy
recognized his false step, seen that he had made a mistake
successfully repulsed, met, checked, and driven back
- 50 beat a precipitate retreat, run away back as fast as they could
A like evil fate &c, misfortune or defeat followed all the efforts of Nazir Khan

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- 50 Khulm, in Afghan Turkestan, formerly capital of khanate of same name, now decayed It lay four miles north of Tashkurgan
Kunduz, the capital of the district of the same name west of Balkh, south of Oxus
Khanabad (*Khana-i-bad*), twelve miles west of Kunduz, in Kunduz District.
complete the destruction, &c, bring to an end the conquest of the Usbeks
- 51 delivering the princess, &c, setting the princess free
Bala Hissar, the fort at southwest corner of Cabul
determine the window, find out for certain which was the window of her room
- 52 had been achieved, &c, a very necessary thing had been done.
devise a means, &c, find out a way by which we could mutually discuss our plans
procured, got or acquired in some way
- 53 he would not have been visible, no one could have seen him
fragrant, sweet-smelling
proved contumacious, would not do what I wished him to do
- 54 cursing my folly, &c, blaming myself for being so silly as to believe such stories
dejected looks, downcast, out of spirits, dispirited expression
- 55 pricked up his ears, &c, looked up, showing great interest
expert in the use of bows, thoroughly skilled in handling
- 56 the imprisoning palace, the Bala Hissar
boaster, one who makes more of what he does or has done than is right
intense suspense, very great anxiety as to what would happen
Sending this missive, &c, it was a very dangerous thing to fasten this message to the ladder, as we did not know for certain who would read it
- 57 achieving the release, man aging to set free

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58. apprehensively, in great dread
fears agreeably disap-
pointed, it gave us great pleasure
to find our fears groundless
adequate means of convey-
ance, a way in which the princess
and her women and ourselves
could travel properly
exhausted my rupees, &c,
my money had been nearly all used
up
59 persuaded, made to believe or
think it right
Arabian coffee. Coffee origi-
nally came from Arabia
suavely, gently, soothingly
evident vanity, his manifest
pride in his wisdom and wealth
60 perplexity, state of doubt, in-
ability to decide what to do next
My temper &c, I had been
made touchy or easily angered
61 my Impassioned words, my
strongly expressed anger and dis-
gust at his proposal.
intrinsic value, what the ring
would bring in any market
62 contemptuous pity, scorn for
my ignorance and sorrow for my
stupidity
his intense eagerness, &c, the
very, very strong wish he felt to
have the ruby
63 inexorable, not to be moved by
pleading or argument
amply sufficient, more than
enough
To ensure secrecy, to make
sure that no one else would know
about the matter
65 rencontre, meeting with the
watchman
66 to prevent the ladies, &c, to
keep the princess and her maids
from coming against the wall
rewarded me, &c, gave me a
sufficient return or payment for
what I had done
was dissuaded from, was
brought to think it right not to
do it
67 to move her from, &c, to make
her act otherwise than as she had
determined

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- 67 was indisposed, was unwell or
sick
suspicions, &c, at last they be-
gan to think that there was some-
thing which must be examined
into
advance as far as possible,
&c, to get on before the hottest
part of the day made it needful to
take shelter and to rest
glimmer of dawn, streak of
light showing the day about to
break
68. a favourable opportunity, a
chance that looked good, or as if
it might be taken advantage of.
mullah (or *mu'lla*), a Mahometan
priest, a mosque officer whose duty
it is to call to prayers and usually
to lead them
resources at his disposal, with
all the help he could possibly give
under the guidance, &c, the
princess led and showed us the
way
pir, saint
joy depicted, &c the pleasure
and delight that showed on his
face were good to see
69 explained the situation, made
it clear how matters stood
devoted myself, &c, taken on
myself a vow to help her and to
give my whole time and powers to
doing so
proposed to follow, &c, in-
tended to go with the princess and
share with her her luck, whether
good or bad
70 devise ways and means, &c,
to make plans and arrange how
they should be carried out
hopelessly incomplete, how
perfectly insufficient the arrange-
ments I had made were to attain
their end, to get the princess to
her native city, Balkh
to obtain egress, to be let out
of the carefully watched gates
provided for them, made ar-
rangements to get over the diffi-
culties
this we had solved, we had got
the princess out of the Bala Hissar
route we had to, &c, the road
we had to go to get to Balkh

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- 70 passport, a permission from the rulers to make their way to Surat
- 71 entrusted to the guidance, given over to two grooms to look after
- quickly arranged, speedily fixed and put in order
- described us as, &c, stated that we were
- Mecca, the birthplace of Mahomet, is the most holy city of the Mahometans
- in any circumstances, &c, in any case it was the right way to prevent the guards from guessing where we were going
72. scanned our passport, looked at our permission from the rulers
- 73 of my heart, whom I loved so passionately
- restore her to, &c, give her back to her friends and make her queen of her rightful kingdom
- had to be surmounted, had to be overcome
- could be achieved, could be finally done
- my star was in the ascendant, that it was a lucky time for me, that my efforts would be successful
- no inglorious lot, it would be a famous, a grand thing
- 74 fetch a compass, go by a round-about way to a point
- cross paths, ways leading from one main road to another
- intercept us, catch us before we could get to Balkh
- to be carrying everything, &c, to be winning everywhere, easily
- attended by, &c, accompanied and guarded by
- to interrogate, to question
- Badakshan, the north-eastern province of Afghanistan
- 75 are suspicious, are reasons for my doubting your statement that you are peaceful merchants
- league with &c, in alliance with our foes, the Uzbeks
- affected not to believe, pretended that he did not trust as true
- conveying munitions of war carrying weapons, &c

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- 75 Without vouchsafing, seemingly not considering it worth while
- revealed to view, brought into the open so that it might be seen
- righteous anger, wrath for which there was good cause
- it was overspread, her face showed her wrath
- 76 prevent thee, keep thee from being placed in my harem
- essential, absolutely necessary
- the cavalier's presumption, the horseman's impudence and arrogance
- humbly besought, meekly prayed or begged the man
- Treating contemptuous silence, acting as if it were not worth answering
- 77 behind the unsuspecting, &c at the back of the horseman, who had not the slightest idea of what I meant to do
- hostile intention, any purpose of treating him as an enemy
- completely at my mercy, I could have done anything to him I liked
- hand and foot, very thoroughly, both arms and legs
- seaman's dexterity, with the cleverness seamen learn in fastening ropes round things
- effective manner, thoroughly complete way
- speechless, &c was so angry he could not speak
- ignominious, &c, shameful state to which he had been brought
- contemptuously regarded, scornfully looked on
- When he found his voice, was able to speak, his self-control having so far returned
- denouncing vengeance, &c, proclaiming what punishment his captives would suffer
- smothering his curses, gagging him so that he could not abuse them
- 78 containing rubies, holding rubies
- written, &c, the writing, which

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was in Persian letters, was on a small piece of prepared goat skin
78 precipitately, in great haste

proceeds of the plunder, the results of the robbery of some temple or royal dwelling

delay was dangerous, waiting would bring great risks on us

overwhelming force, in such numbers that we would have no chance in fighting against them

to their rescue, to take the men out of our hands

arch traitor Pym, chief opponent of Charles I, and leader of the Parliamentary party till his death in 1643. The Royalists hated him, and he was admired by the Puritans

Stone dead has no fellow, a dead man can't conspire or do other harm

79 polluted, horrified, made unclean

appropriated &c, took over for myself, used for my own riding horse

fruit-trees Cabul is still noted for the quantity and quality of the different kinds of fruit grown in its gardens

80 watered by a crystal stream Cabul and the country round it is well supplied with water

maintained for intermission, for five hours without stopping we had gone forward as fast as we could

the land of our birth, Scotland

fresh culled, just plucked or pulled from the trees round us

not exhausted, not tired out or wearied

81 to reduce, to force to surrender by siege or blockade

Faizabad, the capital of Badkshan, 180 miles north-east of Cabul

national resistance, fight put up against the enemy by people as a nation

not entirely broken, not yet brought to an end

concentrate &c, bring together at one place all his soldiers so as to subdue it

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81 to abandon our intention, to give up our plan of going by the shortest way

Charikar, an Afghan town between 30 and 40 miles north of Cabul

82 strongly occupied, there would be a large force of soldiers along the route to make sure that communications were not interrupted

Candahar, the most important commercial town in Afghanistan, lies 280 miles south-west of Cabul

Ghazni, lies 80 miles south-west of Cabul. Capital formerly of the great conqueror Mahmud of Ghazni

Cabul river The Cabul river rises some 40 miles west of Cabul near the Unai pass

83 found shelter, protection from the night wind and cold

best apartment, best furnished and most comfortable room

serious obstacle, finding anything in our way to compel us to stop

84 congratulating her, telling her how lucky I thought she had been

not only my captivity not only that I am held a prisoner of war by the Moguls

enslavement, reduction to a condition in which they are no longer freemen of my whole country

oppose successfully, &c, manage to prevent him from doing what he wished to do

children of fortune, men for whom fate has decreed great things

second sight, a power supposed to be possessed by some of seeing now future events as they shall happen

yielding to despair, becoming hopeless about my condition

85 blush suffused the blood rushed to her cheeks heightening her colour

archly, with amusement taking the matter is fun

owed you by destiny, whom fate has fixed you should marry

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85 breathe the upper air, am
above ground, am living

expect your favour, hope that
you will love me and become my
wife

my horoscope, the fate fixed
for me at my birth as shown by
the position of the different stars
and star clusters at the moment

86 predominate, have greater
power

clatter, rattling noise, irregu-
larly repeated sharp sounds

His ears had not, &c, he had
heard, and given the right meaning
to what he heard

probably pursuing, &c, in all
likelihood they were following to
take us prisoners

87 vainly besought begged ear-
nestly but to no purpose

abandon the pursuit, cease to
chase us

scene of danger, the place
where there was a risk of being
hurt or killed

88 encouraging each other, giving
courage or heart to one another

discomfited, &c, beaten, de-
feated, and humbled

89 charging home, pushing the
attack right up to us

bullet found its billet, the
mark was struck

insurmountable obstacle, a
hindrance to carrying out their
purpose they could not get over

in quick succession, rapidly
one after the other

90 futilely &c, cutting to no useful
end the body of the cut with their
swords

gave them a second volley,
fired at them a second time

disengaged himself, &c, man-
aged to free himself from the dead
body of his horse

making a long detour, going
a long way round to cut them off

bring us to our knees, force
us to beg to be allowed to submit

strong position, &c, the place
where we were, which could be
easily defended

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91 play a waiting game, to make
arrangements and let time compel
us to yield

fierce gesticulations, move-
ments of his body which showed
his anger

equally warm reception, we
killed as many as we did in the
first charge

discharge of our missiles, the
firing of our guns and pistols and
the shooting of our arrows

92 brandishing, swinging back
ward and forward

paused on the threshold,
stopped at the entrance into the
pass

his comrades could &c, the
companions of the soldier could
attack him

perilous in the extreme, very
dangerous or risky

93 carried past us, borne further
on by their horses being unable to
stop

it would have gone hard, &c,
I would in all likelihood have been
killed or badly wounded

the star of my destiny, the
bright reward which fate had de-
creed for me, and which with its
brightness drew me onward

sumpter mules, mules that
carried the luggage, &c

take part in the fray, join in
the battle against our enemies

hereloquence and reproaches,
&c, what she said to them made
them join us

94 concentrated their efforts,
made their attack together

despatched him, put him to
death

disappoint the estimate, fail
to come up to the high opinion
of his spirit and courage I had
formed

95 raging furiously, being carried
on with the utmost violence

snapped off at the hilt was
broken off close to the handle

flowing profusely, streaming
forth

96 their approach was impeded
they could not get to us easily on

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- account of the dead bodies that lay in the road
- 96 execution they had done, the great number they had killed •
- 97 a welcome respite a pleasant and much needed pause
obeyed with alacrity, carried out very quickly
- 98 evidently demoralized, clearly upset or in a state of panic
assume an air of superiority, act as if I was sure I had the upper hand
- attacking peaceful traders, making a war on merchants going quietly about their business
- 99 to proceed on your way, to continue your journey
persist in fighting, continue your attack.
mightier than yourselves, better fighters, stronger than you
indignant, &c, angry and annoyed at being told to do their worst
seeing the certain death feeling that some of them would surely be killed
- 100 derisively, mocking at them, contemptuously
impressed, forced by the Moguls to join their ranks as soldiers
- 101 to take the first opportunity, &c, to run away the first chance they had
swear fealty, vow to be faithful
late accession of strength, the men who had just joined us
continuance of our journey, going on again on our way to Balkh
chivalrous opponent, adversary who liked to fight fair, and was thus like one of the knights of old
- 102 exhortations, her prayers and utings
- 103 so lion-like, with such extreme courage, dauntless bravery
stanchied the blood, managed to make it stop flowing
burly giant, big, strong, and muscular fellow
- 104 proceeded on our journey, went on our way, went forward

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- 104 to try conclusions, to fight us to see if they could beat us
- 105 so far advanced the winter was so long past that we did not need to fear snowstorms
recommendations, letters asking the help of the people to whom they were addressed for the persons who brought them
inestimable value, so great service that they were priceless
- 106 customary salutation, the usual form of address used in the East when meeting people
honey-combed with caves, have caves all along their sides, as the wax of the comb has hollows to hold the honey
sherbet, a favourite Eastern drink consisting of fruit juices and water
too exhausted, &c, too tired to be able to eat
trenchers, plates on which the meat is placed and from which it is eaten
- 107 skins of it, skin bottles or bags filled with the wine of Kafiristan
whose virtues, worthinesses, good qualities, excellencies
put to shame, make many of the teachers of Christianity ashamed of themselves for being so much less good than a Mahometan
had now to ascend On their way to Balkh they had to cross the Koh-i-Baba, which has an average height of over 10,000 feet, though many of the peaks are said to be over 17,000 feet
- 108 My disciples, those whom I teach, my followers
shall be dishonoured feel that others will consider we did not act rightly
polite altercation, kindly expression on both sides of their different ideas and of their reasons for holding them
dervish, a Mahometan religious beggar, a monk or priest, a fakir
- 109 The greedy gleam, the thirst for gain that shone in his look
sturdy robber, a thief who

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takes from others their property by force

109 inciting them, trying to move them to refuse to do what they are told

110 might have an opportunity, might get a chance

111 bend my bow on, aim my arrow at

In all difficulties, whenever any trouble arose that needed to be carefully guarded against or thought over

overwhelmed by the consciousness, overcome by the feeling that my birth was not so noble as hers

if occasion required, if the need to use them arose

112 reminded of &c, brought back to our memory our native land

postins (*poshteens*), long Afghan coats made of sheepskin

conducted himself, &c, he behaved properly, acted in the right way

Hajeeguk, a pass over the Hindu Kush, nearly 13,000 feet above sea level

still more elevated pass, still higher pass The Hindu Kush have numerous passes through them, running at from 12,500 feet to 19,000 feet above sea level

the frozen snow, &c, although it was about the hottest part of the year the snow was still crisp and hard, had not melted

113 Bameean (*Bamian*), where the Hindu Kush ends in the Koh-i-Baba. The Kotal-i Irak (13,500 feet) leads into the valley of Bamian, and is one of the two chief passes across the mountains from Afghanistan into Turkestan. The Bamian valley is rich in Buddhist remains and rock-cut figures

114 constructed by devils, made by fiends or evil spirits, who wished to draw men away from the worship of the one God

could not deter me, make me give up going to see the monuments

was more than an idle, &c,

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was for use, not merely for amusement

115 much mutilated, broken and defaced

abominate, hate greatly, dislike extremely

projection of the rock, a part of the rock protruding or sticking out

devilish workmanship, work done by or for evil spirits, work of fiends, that is, of enemies of God and of His laws

116 he showed signs, &c, the deivish showed in various ways that he was tried

the steepest crags, the mountain slopes rising most nearly upright

coign of vantage, corner or spot from which best view of pictures could be got

bust of a woman, the shoulders and upper part of the body of a woman

roused from my absorption, my thoughts were taken off the pictures to which they had been entirely given

running away to the summit, making as fast as he could for the top

117 gave up, &c, stopped trying to get hold of the deivish

retraced my steps, went back down

a state of great agitation, a greatly disturbed condition

118 a man-slaying virago, a bold unwomanly creature who had killed men

do not shed the blood, &c, do not fight with their foes and like men kill them

Black Agnes of Dunbar, the daughter of Randolph, Earl of Moray, and wife of the Earl of March, defended the castle of Dunbar against the English forces under the Earl of Salisbury until that leader was forced to raise the siege and retire

from the hostile steel, from the enemy's swords and spears

masquerading, dressed like and pretending to be, a man

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119 reproaching, blaming, finding fault with

protecting, &c, warding off danger that threatens your master

unkind reference, a statement that, bearing on another circumstance, hurt sorely the person to whom it was made

120 endure the approach let a mouse come near her without being flustered

121 the majority of the inhabitants &c Most of the people were Usbegs

rejoiced to find herself was exceedingly glad that she was again

give me lessons &c, teach me to speak, to use

122 Scotch braes, hill slopes of Scotland

Dunstaffnage, to the north east of Oban in the west of Scotland, has the ruins of an old castle, and is supposed to have been an early capital of Scotland

encountering any further adventures, &c, nothing happened to us worth speaking about

out of deference, from a desire to show respect for, conform to

a more distant manner, kept more aloof and talked less freely with me

I was debarred from, I was prevented from, not allowed to

freedom of intercourse, liberty to talk with each other, to be companions to each other

graciously, in a friendly, kindly way

restoration to her native land, being brought back to her own country

123 I had bartered, I had sold or exchanged for something else

to provide for her escape, to prepare for getting her set free

restored to her keeping, gave back into her charge

such an opportunity, such a good chance

124 May I never aspire to, am I not to be allowed to hope for

impassioned appeal, strongly

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felt and warmly expressed enmity

124 at the accomplishment, &c, at having done a thing so difficult

was almost overwhelmed, was almost entirely driven out of sight

delightful communion pleasant interchange of thoughts and feelings

125 I owed my life &c, she had saved my life by her care

gave an additional zest, &c, made life still more pleasant

made a circuit, &c, were twenty miles round

126 the capital of Shah Jehan, Delhi

had been sent on &c, had gone on in front to say the prince was coming

Khan of Samarcand, the king or ruler of one of the most noted and oldest cities of Central Asia, a city said to have been founded by Alexander the Great

rapidly prepared, &c, quickly got ready for us to live in

liberally provided, of which the supply was plentiful

maintain his position, hold his place there against the enemy

127 rally round his standard gather together as his army

crushing all attempts, &c, breaking up and destroying all enemy forces that opposed them

held aloof, kept out of the fight

disputed the validity, &c, did not think he had a rightful claim to the throne

affected to believe, pretended that such were their opinions

supporting the cause, &c, was helping Zohra to gain her rights

with the professed object, with the definitely stated purpose

originally been invited, &c, at the beginning had been asked to come north and help the Khan of Samarcand against Balkh

was at a very low ebb, &c, was in a very poor way

calculated to restore, &c, of the sort that were likely to make

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- the Usbeks act all together for the common good of their country
- 128 to deliberate, &c, to discuss and settle what ought to be done
- 129 repaired, went notables, important men, leaders
- were prevented, &c, were either too old to fight under Nazir Khan, or did not wish to do so
- Cyrus, called "The Great", the founder of the Persian Empire, is identified with *Karkhusara*, not Kai Kaaos, as stated in the text, but his successor
- more impetuous, more ardent or eager
- to assert her claim, &c, to come forward and declare herself Queen of Balkh
- thought the proposal premature, thought things were not yet advanced enough to proclaim the princess Queen
- were proposed and discussed, were put forward and talked over
- 130 the struggle was hopeless, that they had no chance of success against Aurangzebe
- repeated failures, inability again and again to gain what he sought
- usurped, seized without just right
- rally round the throne, bring all their forces to help the princess
- mullah, a Mahometan ascetic, a learned Mussulman, who summons to prayer, and as a rule leads the devotions
- 131 khan, the chief or ruler of a clan
- almost at our gates, near at hand, coming quite close up to us
- successful resistance, meeting the attack and beating it back
- discomfited, foiled and beaten
- 132 avaricious, greedy for wealth or money
- supernatural power, ability greater than human
- permitted to address, allowed to make a speech to
- succour a distressed princess,

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- give comfort and help to a princess in trouble
- 132 kept in durance, held a prisoner
- 133 ravaged our land, plundered and laid waste our country
- ordained by fate to, &c, to whom the power that determines what must be has given the task of freeing your land
- 134 insight into the future, powers of seeing beforehand what is to happen
- my future destiny, what would happen to me in years to come
- threatened the liberty, looked as if it would take away the freedom
- huge animals, &c, elephants with their trunks and tails
- through the help of Providence, aided by the Power that watches over man
- condemn my presumption, blame me for being too forward
- derive encouragement, gather comfort and hope
- 135 Jizak (*Jizakh*), a town in Russia in Asia, to the north east of Samarcand, and on the southern edge of the Kamished Steppe
- Shaibani, Usbek Khan and conqueror, defeated by Ismael, Shah of Persia, 1510. He defeated Baber and drove him from Samarcand
- tombless dead, unburied dead
- decided most of the waverers, made most of those who were in doubt make up their mind
- 136 in the conduct of the campaign, as to the way the war should be carried on
- resist successfully, defeat and drive back from your country
- 137 devising in concert, putting their heads together and thinking out a plan all could take part in carrying out
- Lord Swinton. The reference is to the action of Sir John Swinton at Homildon, where the Scots were defeated in 1402. "Why stand we here to be slain like deer?" he said. "Follow me and let us at least sell our lives as

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dearly as we can " Sir Adam de Gordon, between whom and Swinton there was a deadly feud, there upon begged Swinton's forgiveness and the honour of being knighted by so brave a leader. Both were slain in the battle

- 137 harmony in their counsels, an accepted agreement about what should be done

common action, what they did was not mutually helpful, they did not combine so as to gain a particular end

- 138 universal approval, all in the assembly thought what I said right

Tamerlane, the great Laitai conqueror Timur, born near Samarcand in 1333, conquered all Central Western Asia, and much of Europe, and part of India. He was preparing to attack China when he died in 1405

- 139 disclose, tell them about, make known

consider the details, make arrangements as to what should be done, and in what order

- 140 Faizabad, the capital of Badakshan which contains ruby mines and clifts of lapis lazuli

all the available, all the Usbeg soldiers that could be put in the field

- 141 suggestions, plans, schemes or devices put forward as likely to attain object

inferred, drawn as a conclusion
bon vivant, one who enjoys greatly the pleasures of the table and of good fellowship

Pilafs, meat cooked with rice, raisins, and spices

curries, meat or other food cooked with curry, a strong Indian sauce made with salt, pepper, turmeric, and other spices

kabobs, small pieces of meat roasted on skewers

apricots, the delicious fruit of a kind of plum tree

sherbet, a drink made with water and sugar from fruit juice, and cooled or "sublimed" with snow

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- 141 that fall to the lot, that are given by fate or the condition of things to a person

abundant supply, a quite more than sufficient quantity

congratulate myself, to think I had been very lucky

- 142 shrewdness, &c quickness, to form a right estimate or opinion, and knowledge to use his information to advantage in war

taking a favourable view, &c, thinking that matters were all right with us

- 143 favourable opportunity &c, a time when the rebellion is likely to succeed

be assured feel quite certain, have not the least doubt

regarded all Europeans, &c, thought all men from Europe wizards

to muster, to gather together

- 144 line of communications, road by which supplies and news, &c, was brought to him

will gain every advantage, &c, will be able to make the most of

their agility, &c, their practice and skill in mountaineering

will be a source of weakness &c, the want of supplies will affect them more severely the more numerous they are

efficacious, productive of result intended

no danger is apprehended they do not expect attacks on lines of communication, and have not arranged to meet such

false feeling of security, belief that they are safe when they really are not

will weaken, will make them pay less attention to guarding the road between the army and its base than they ought

prospect of victory, apparent likelihood of beating the enemy

- 145 accompanied &c, went along with us

no opportunity &c got no chance of seeing or speaking to her

rendered the Mogul line, &c,

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- made the distance between base and army still greater
- 145 made them confident, &c, made them feel sure it would all come to pass
- 146 kinsmen, the people south of the Oxus, like himself, Uzbeks suffer the fate of, &c, he taken like Balkh by the Moguls
- "Tua res agitur", &c, "It is your concern when your neighbour's house is ablaze"
- Akcha, a place a few miles north west of Balkh
- patriotic struggle, fight to free fatherland
- 147 specially selected &c, chosen because they shot well with long bows
- 148 our intentions, what we were going to do
- 149 impede the rapidity &c make it less easy to go forward quickly
- oatmeal and girdles, &c The Scots raiders who entered England under Douglas and Randolph are said to have carried nothing by way of supplies save a bag of oatmeal, and a flat iron or girdle on which to bake the cakes made of it They supplied themselves with beef from the raided country
- Edward III (1327-77) found himself at the beginning of his reign unable to bring the Scots raiders under Douglas and Randolph to battle, and was forced to disband his army, leaving them to return to Scotland laden with booty
- 150 highest mountain in Scotland is Ben Nevis, 4406 feet high
- tortuous and difficult, winding and hard to climb
- perilous enterprise, undertaking in which we ran great risks
- 151 had determined, had fixed up or arranged that we should assail Aurangzebe's army
- cautiously, carefully
- rapidly fading light the growing darkness
- craning, stretching out
- torrent power, strength is a rapid stream
- 152 a great bald scar, a great bare stretch of rock

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- 152 a great fragment &c, a great bit of the rock had torn away and fallen off
- detach themselves, &c to break off and fall into the deep hollow
- precipitated, &c, hurled down with it and killed
- ideal one of the best suited that could be thought of
- meditated, planned, intended to make
- announced told us
- pitch their camp &c wait till they got daylight before venturing through the narrow valley
- 153 afforded shelter, &c, protected the camp from the cold east wind
- to use our advantage, to make the most of our favourable conditions
- The terror, &c They would be more frightened by a night attack entirely off their guard, had no notion that danger threatened them, and had made no preparations to meet it
- treachery or accident, by one of our party who knew going over to the enemy, or completely by chance
- 154 could observe the movements, could see what the enemy was doing
- had been contemplated, had been looked forward to as the thing to do
- had instructed the troopers, &c had told the soldiers what they were to do and how
- most adventurous men, most daring men
- 155 should occupy the cliffs should take up their position along the top of the precipice overlooking the ravine
- prearranged disposition the plan for placing the troops previously agreed on
- effective volley a volley that killed many of the enemy
- 156 precipitate them, hurl them down

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- 156 As my destiny, &c This hardly seems the thought that would occur to the kind of man the hero is supposed to be
 circuitous route, roundabout road
 157 lowest ebb of vitality, human energy is then least strong
 158 distinguish the colours, see the differences of, know one from other
 imprecations, oaths
 arrayed themselves, formed themselves into, drew up in
 159 Samson, a Jewish hero and deliverer, the fifteenth in order of the judges who managed the affairs of the Jews before the establishment of the kingdom The Semitic Hercules He pulled down the pillars of the temple, bringing the building down on himself and the Philistines
 incapable of retaliating, un-able to inflict any hurt in revenge
 massacre, an indiscriminate killing of men without need and without any right to do so
 160 what they would inflict, &c, the horrors they were ready to make the people of the country they were attacking suffer
 wantonly, without just cause
 remained passive, stood still, did nothing but endure
 helplessly exposed, &c, they had nothing to protect them from being shot, and were unable to reply
 northern entrance, the part nearest the front at that time
 urging a movement, asking the men to force their way in that direction
 161 bear a charmed life, as if nothing could hurt him
 emerging, coming out of
 harass, worry and annoy the retreating foe
 162 gold mohurs, a gold coin of the value of 15 rupees or $1\frac{1}{2}$ sovereigns
 relieve the sufferings, &c, help them to bear the pain or make the pain less

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- 162 as an atonement, to make up in a certain way for
 overwhelming body, a force so numerous that we would have no chance against it
 Bajkak, one of the Khawak group of passes between Badakshan and Cabul
 rallying his followers gathering those who had fled together into a single force
 to press northwards, to hurry back in the direction of Badakshan
 prevent respite, hinder the beaten foe from rallying or resting
 163 attempting to get, &c, trying to form themselves into a united force
 about a furlong, nearly 200 yards A furlong = 220 yards or 660 feet
 to secure our retreat, to make it safe for us to draw back
 unfavourable for, &c horse men were at a disadvantage in fighting them
 such a contingency, such a thing happening
 164 established in a strong position, had got themselves fixed in a place from which it would be hard for the enemy to drive them out
 obviate the danger, &c prevent ourselves from being attacked from behind
 infuriated, put into a rage
 succession of sword-cuts, one sword cut delivered after another
 165 succeeded in wounding, managed to cut him with his sword
 almost succeeded, &c, nearly managed to take him prisoner
 drove back their assailants, drove back the Moguls who were attacking them
 interlacing hands and wrists, crossing them so that right hand grasped right hand, &c, interlocking
 reinforce our assailants, to add to the strength of those attacking us
 166 pursued with shouts, &c, rushed after us crying out with joy

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166 arriving at, &c, coming to the meeting-place agreed upon

took refuge, &c, sought safety among the hills

167 have it properly, &c make sure that it was properly cared for

secure such a success gain such an advantage

the enemy were on the alert, the enemy kept a careful outlook for such attacks, and were ready to meet them

to catch them unawares, to surprise them

moral effect, &c The lowering of the spirit and courage of the Moguls was even more important than the damage done them

apprehending surprises, &c, in fear of their lives of being caught unawares or getting into positions from which they would not be able to escape

168 to impair the courage, to lessen, subdue, or overcome them bravely

in which they were worsted, in which they were beaten

recognize the gravity, &c, see how serious these attacks on the lines of communication were

weaken the advance, &c He had to draw men from the front to guard the communication lines

to a considerable body, to a pretty large force

deserved the name of timeman, &c He had as good a right to be described as the man who always lost as Sir Archibald Douglas had, whose army was almost destroyed by the English archers at Halidon Hill

whether they could maintain, if they were able to hold their own in battle

169 indecisive, leading to no definite result

seeming impossibility, &c My getting her to marry me seemed a thing that could not happen

won a place, &c, made her love me

a great exploit, &c If I did something very remarkable against

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the enemy it might make it more likely the princess would marry me

169 insatiable craving I could never have enough of dimgul and stu

especially apt, &c, more than usually likely to be the case

the capture or death &c, to take Amangzebe captive or to kill him

successful conclusion, bring the war to an end in our favour

170 for a favourable opportunity, for a good chance turning up

well-equipped, well furnished for war purposes

reflected the sunlight, threw back the sunbeams that fell on it

acclamations, shouts of joy and applause

171 I had long thirsted, I had wished anxiously for a long time to turn up

secure his person, take him prisoner get hold of him

would probably, &c, most likely he would go on in the morning to the next post

undefended by any rampart, it had no fortifications round it

easily distinguished, remarkable differed from other tents

feigned attacks assaults made to distract attention from real assault

172 Edward III, then only a youth of fifteen

we might easily be mistaken, &c Sir James Douglas nearly reached Edward's tent by pretending to be an English knight looking after the watch

arrows steeped in naphtha These were lit before being discharged

173 that they were surrounded, that a great army was round them

distracted the attention, kept the Moguls from looking closely at us

encountering any opposition meeting any who tried to hinder us

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173 **ebony walking-stick**, a staff of a very hard black-coloured wood

174 **mistook us for**, thought that we were

hostile intentions, our purpose of attacking him

vaulted, leapt

Ali Merdan Khan, Shah Jehan's general, who was sent first to Balkh and Badakshan and failed

Jagat Singh, who ruled Kotah from 1658 to 1670, and his brother **Jai Singh**, who followed the incompetent **Prem Singh**, were succeeded in Kotah by **Kishor Singh**, one of Aurangzebe's most trusted generals

175 **a great indignity**, a great insult, a source of shame

gave the word, issued the order

176 **recalled**, brought back

casual plunder, chance booty

exaggerated, made more impressive or frightful

the hearts of the Moguls sank, their courage grew less and less

ignominious flight, shamefully running away

tints of autumn, &c, the leaves began to turn yellow, to wither

177 **held effectual possession**, was completely master of

could not venture &c, durst not travel through

martial ardour, &c, burning love for fighting and trust in their commanders

coveted, eagerly desired **Burma** now supplies most of world's rubies

a disastrous retreat, a return across the Hindu Kush, in which great numbers of men and great quantities of material would be lost

rendered the passes, &c, made it impossible to go back through the passes

refused to succumb, would not yield to the temptation

178 **mysterious magic-stone** The worship of stones and the ascription of magic powers to them was formerly very widespread

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179 **arbitrament**, to the test or trial

the exultation, &c, the joy of the **Uzbeks** was beyond words

to array, to draw up in battle order

180 **suggestion of a compromise, &c** to ask the two parties to take a middle way

tried absolutely &c, attempted to make it impossible for **Aurangzebe** to go away

temerity, rashness, hardihood

enslaving the hardy mountaineers, making slaves of the sturdy inhabitants of the mountains

181 **with the possibility, &c**, knowing that they could get safely away to their own country

"tineman", as one fated to lose battles **Old English**, *lenen* = to lose

determined, &c, agreed upon by the leaders the fight should take place

182 **was to operate**, was to make his attack

pallets, poor, rough beds

proximity, &c, the near approach of their foes

an easy prey, victims that put up a poor fight for their lives

imposing array, when drawn up in order of battle they looked a very powerful fighting force

183 **were not disposed**, were not inclined, thought it very risky

dismayed, &c, terrified by the great numbers of their closely ranked enemies

appalled, dreadfully frightened

Pyrrhus, king of Epirus (318 B.C. to 272 B.C.), one of the greatest generals of the old world, defeated the Romans at **Heracleia** and **Asculum**, and was defeated finally by the Romans at **Beneventum**, 276 B.C.

stoic philosophers, thinkers who believed with **Zeno** that men should be unmoved by joy or grief, and submit to whatever happens without grumbling

184 **carrying my idea, &c**, in putting my plan in force

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- 184 anticipated, foreseen
in thick array, closely packed together
pitiable state of confusion, a disorder so complete that they were to be pitied
- 185 with the confidence, &c, feeling sure that we had already won
general stampede, terror stricken flight
imperturbably calm, utterly unmoved by what had taken place
He did not lose his presence of mind in the least
successfully repulsed did not gain their object, and were thrown back
- 186 shared with human warriors, &c, he was as glad of a fight as the men were
dangerously conspicuous, too prominent for safety
release me save me and bring me out of my dangerous place
- 187 distinguished from the rest, marked out from the rest of the Moguls
recoiled, &c, drew back a few yards before their furious attack
did not venture, did not dare take the risk
- 188 led to no decisive result, we neither of us got the better of the other
was soon lost, gave place to the general battle
- 189 taking any further part, fighting any longer
spectator, a looker on, one who watches what is taking place
serried order, with closed ranks
exhausted by their great exertions, worn out by the efforts they had made
- 190 the campaign, &c the cold and snow might be safely left to fight the battle against Aurang zebe
obliterated, &c, made it impossible to distinguish where they were or how they should go
straggled after Aurangzebe, followed in a long irregular line on the heels of the commander

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- 191 to celebrate our defeat, &c, to mark the joy of the people at having driven out the Moguls
celebrating, singing the praises of
- 192 with a gloomy countenance, looking wretchedly unhappy
Bebahrah = "Tineman", the loser
powerful adherents, supporters who had great power
orthodox, those who held rigidly to received religious opinions
opposed, declared that no woman should rule over a country
pretensions, claims to the throne
- 193 supernatural powers, by forces greater than could belong to men
he coveted, he longed or wished eagerly for
enthroned as sovereign, made queen of the Usbeks
were almost unanimous, &c, nearly every one of them supported the claims of the princess
appointed by destiny, fated to become king
similar prediction, a prophecy of the same meaning
- 194 rescued from captivity, snatched from the hands of her captors
saved from the yoke, kept from being subdued and made subject
diffidence, literally lack of trust
golden opportunity, the splendid chance
chivalrous homage knightly service and devotion
deserts, worthy deeds or qualities
- 195 that the happiness, &c, that on the conclusion came to depended my future happiness on misery
substituted, &c, replaced it by, put for use instead of leather skin
- 196 an alternative reason, another reason for not asking the princess to marry me
recovered to some extent, was able in some degree to say what I thought

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- 196 indistinctly, that could not easily be made out or heard
 inspired by love, &c, made bold by my deep love for you
 peerless beauty, loveliness that was without a match
- 197 hereditary right, a thing that belongs to you on account of your birth
 more formidable, more to be feared
 encased, enclosed, shut up
- 198 symbol, sign or token
 flood of rapture, a wave of extreme delight or ecstasy
- 199 embroidered, worked with a needle in gold or silver thread
 precious possession, very valuable thing now belonging to me
 mutual affection, love for each other
 discreet distance, a well-judged spot where her presence would not be felt a restraint
- 200 assured her, &c, told her that what she owed to her mother and to her subjects required her to remain in Balkh
 good name and happiness, the fame and contentment and pleasure
 avoid the responsibilities, shirk the tasks assigned her by Providence
 affianced, &c, pledged to marry each other
- 201 apprehensions, fear that we were running risks
 would not be permanent, would not last
- 202 the great day, &c, our marriage or wedding day
 anonymous, without a signature or name of writer
 imminent, &c, troubles or evils threatening to happen to her
- 203 exposed to a treacherous, &c, if anyone attacked me with out warning
 pacing up and down, walking backwards and forwards with measured steps
 triumphant malice, hatred that was about to be satisfied
 ill-favoured, &c, his ugly face

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- 203 descendant of a race of &c, of royal lineage, had kings for my forefathers
- 204 the prison allotted, &c, the prison to which she is to be sent,
 unscrupulous foe, an enemy without regard to what is fair or just
 nameless invitation, an unsigned letter asking me
 What mercy may be shown? How can any pity or tolerance be shown to an unbeliever who wishes to rule believers?
- compunction, pity, mercy
- 205 in humble guise, with great show of humility of mind.
 like an inspiration, a thought put into my mind by the Ruler of the world
 boxing experience, practice of boxing, bouts of boxing
- 206 burst upon the scene, made their appearance unexpectedly
 prostrate and speechless, lying flat and senseless on the ground
 Every moment is precious, there's not a moment to be lost if we are to save her
 made an attempt, &c, tried to hinder us from freeing the princess and her maid
- 207 threats of instant death, &c, being told that they would be killed at once if they did not obey
 keep tryst, be at the meeting place as agreed on
- 208 fear treachery, fear false dealing
 mutual congratulations, telling each other how well things had turned out
- 209 respective, that belonged to each individual
- 210 conformed to, &c, attended and took my share in public services
- 211 attacking their creed, &c, finding fault with their beliefs or how they worshipped
 grace the ceremony, to be present at the wedding to add to the show
- 212 was tacitly disregarded, with

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out saying anything taken not to be in force

212 **Kimmiz**, the same as *Koumiss*, fermented mare's milk

oxymel, a mixture of honey and vinegar

hippocras, wine mixed with spices

brandy, an alcoholic liquor got from grape juice

transmit, &c, hand on the power to play the bagpipes to their descendants

213 **grand cazi** (*kazi*), the chief of the priests and judges, whose duty, besides leading public prayers on great occasions, is to register marriages and divorces

Zuleikha, a favourite name in Persian poetry, the mythical wife of the patriarch Joseph

Ali, the fourth Calif (656-61), cousin-germane and adopted son of Mahomet. He was defeated by Moavya and murdered at Kufi

immemorial custom, a practice the institution of which no one could remember, a practice that seems always to have been followed

214 in token of allegiance, as a sign that they were their subjects

turbulent, restless and quarrelsome

dilate, talk at length about

substituted, &c, put less painful punishments than those hitherto employed for use in cases of wrong doing

215 without regard to persons equally applied to all our subjects

appealed to us, &c, when they thought themselves treated unfairly, applied to us

our intervention, &c, our taking their part

had to be sternly suppressed, &c, had to be put down (the revolt from) with firmness

maintained our position, &c, held our place as queen and king of the land

216 **by opposition**, &c, by insisting on them doing and acting in a way they dislike

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216 **flaying the unruly**, &c, skinning alive those who broke the law

leave them to their own devices, let them do as they like

217 **irresistible longing**, a desire so strong that I could not withstand it

that prompted, &c, that led her to make such a suggestion

abdication, giving up of the throne

caused us some chagrin, made us see how little we had done that mattered

formidable rebellion, a dangerous war against constituted authority

219 **a joint embassy**, a combined political mission in which both were interested

was considered advisable, was thought the wisest thing to do

to cultivate, &c, to be on as good terms with him as they could

220 **appreciated our efforts**, thought well enough of what we had tried to do

war of liberation, war to set them free from the Moguls

221 **diverted their thoughts**, turned their minds away from the parting with Abdullah

much instruction, &c, learned a great deal and enjoyed learning it

222 **war between Aurangzebe**, &c, Aurangzebe, before imprisoning his father, fought and beat his brothers Durrani, Shuja and Murad, one after the other

Jumma Mosque *Tima Masjid*, one of the finest buildings of its kind in India

black mosque, the *Kali Masjid* supposed to have been built by one of the Afghan sovereigns

Chandni Chauk, or Silver Street, was the chief thoroughfare in Delhi

223 **couplet**, two lines of poetry, especially two that rhyme

monumental shrine, the *Pir Mahal*, the most famous mausoleum in the world, erected by Shah Jehan for the remains of his wife Arjmand Banu Begam, known as Mumtaz Mahal, or "Exalted of

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- the Palace It is spoken of as
"a dream in marble"
- 223 the superior stature, &c, the
greater height and strength of men
who have to fight the colds of
winter and climb hills
- 224 magnificence displayed, splendour
put out to dazzle and impress
avalanche, a snow slide on the
mountains
- 225 could not have, &c He had
been defeated and driven out of
Balkh and Badakshan
retrospective conversation, our
talk to each other about what had
taken place formerly
absorbed in ourselves, entirely
taken up with each other
risk his craig, risk having his
throat cut or being hanged.
- 226 mask of cynicism, pretence of
doubt of human motives and good
ness
cud hae the heart, &c, my
feelings would not let me hold from
you anything you asked, would
make me grant what you wished
- ill-faured, &c, an ugly, easily
angered old man
thae laddies, the two boys
thae young callants, those two
boys
wee imps, little wild boys, or,
playfully, little rascals
- 227 black hole, Scots for prison cell
posies, bunches of mixed flowers
tuilzie, disturbance, fight
cracked the skull, broke the
head of
keep a calm sough, draw as
little attention to myself as I can
naeboddy will be ony, &c, no
one will know that I am back
This lang-nebbit ane's, &c,
this long-nosed successor is not
like Shah Jehan
- 228 skin and banes, &c, he's thin
and looks half starved Cf 'Yon
Cassius has a lean and hungry
look'
the book of the Prophet Da'ud,
the eldest son of Shah Jehan, was
accused of atheism, and Aurang
zebe came forward as champion
of orthodoxy

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- 228 gey pleased, &c, he will think
it a good thing not to have to pay
my salary
foil his plans, &c, to defeat or
upset the arrangements he had
made to conquer the Usbegs
cup of the poust, an extract
of poppies that would destroy them
mentally and morally
gie him ony mair trouble,
hinder him again from carrying
out his plans
feckless fule, an impotent or
silly senseless fellow
nevoys, nephews
lo'es them, loves or likes them
- 229 my certes I feel quite sure,
upon my word
put oot o' the way, &c, put to
death so that you could do him no
harm
misadventure, mishap, any-
thing going wrong
gallantly defending stoutly
and bravely guarding
religious houses, the monas-
teries and nunneries
bloodthirsty cruelty, &c Men
are strange mixtures of good and
evil
- 231 consecutive account, a story
in which the events are put in
their right order
Marquis of Montrose, he was
put to death in Edinburgh in 1650
Worcester and Dunbar Crom-
well defeated the Scots supporters
of Charles II at Dunbar, near the
east coast of Scotland, in 1650 and
then pursued the king's forces to
the north They turned to the
south west, marched into Eng-
land, were overtaken by Crom-
well's forces at Worcester, and
completely defeated
to the home of my fathers, to
my native country
- 232 the gambols, the sportive
playfulness
could hardly be restrained,
could with difficulty be kept from
Scheveling Bay = Scheveningen,
now the most noted watering place
in Holland two miles north west
of the Hague

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- 233 chartered, engaged for hire,
used of a vessel or boat
regard for externals, attention
to dress and appearance
more presentable, more like
well dressed fashionable people
objurgating, swearing at
- 234 remonstrances on account
my objections to go till I got
better clothes
controversy, discussion as to
whether I should or should not go
- 235 whetted his curiosity, made
him very anxious to know more
admirable was his tact, so
wonderful were his powers of say-
ing and doing the right thing at
the right moment
embarrassment at, &c, I did
not feel flurried or put out at
talking to him freely
courteously pretended, &c,
or in his wish to give me pleasure
seemed as if he were
paid Zohra a graceful com-
pliment, said something kind and
flattering to her
smooth your passage, &c,
make your journey to Scotland
pleasanter
- 236 see your majesty, &c, that is,
if I am allowed to go with you and
see how your people welcome you
at Dover
returning from exile, coming
back home from an enforced stay
in a foreign country
wide canons, rolls of ribbon at
the end of his breeches, that is, he
was dressed in breeches tied at the
knees with wide rolls of ribbon or
of lace
- 237 Hague the political capital of
the Netherlands
had the gratification, had the
pleasure
Pepys, Samuel (1633 to 1703),
son of a tailor, clerk to the Ad-
miralty, has left behind him a
diary, which is one of the recog-
nized authorities for the Restora-
tion period

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- 237, This suggestion, &c She
would not listen to Pepys's advice
to put patches on her face
succumbed, &c, did as the
others did
- 238 Prince of Orange William II,
brother-in-law of Charles II, whose
sister Mary he had married. He
was father of William III, King of
England, &c 1689 to 1702
Duke of York, James, brother
of Charles, was deposed 1689
Duke of Gloucester, Henry, the
third son of Charles I, came with
his brother Charles from Holland,
died in September, 1660, of small
pox
assembled to welcome,
gathered together to show how
glad they were that the king was
restored
participating, &c, taking our
share in the rejoicings for the
restoration to his throne of
Charles II
continual round, &c, constant
parties and feastings tired us
licentiousness, the acting with-
out moral restraint, acting as if
everything were lawful and right
- 239 chief of the clan, the head of
the sept
the sacred soil, the soil of my
native land, which was to me holy
with which they were asso-
ciated, that had been told about
these castles and hills
hearty reception, loving and
loyally demonstrative welcome
Little we recked, we did not
think of or care about
Of "Little she'll reck of yon
Princedom and rent
When I hail her in England
as Countess of Kent"
—Scott's *Talisman*
- 240 reigned without rivals, there
were no others for whom the cham-
men cared as they did for us

